Vol.16

ROKUDA NOBORU

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A LIFELONG FRIEND

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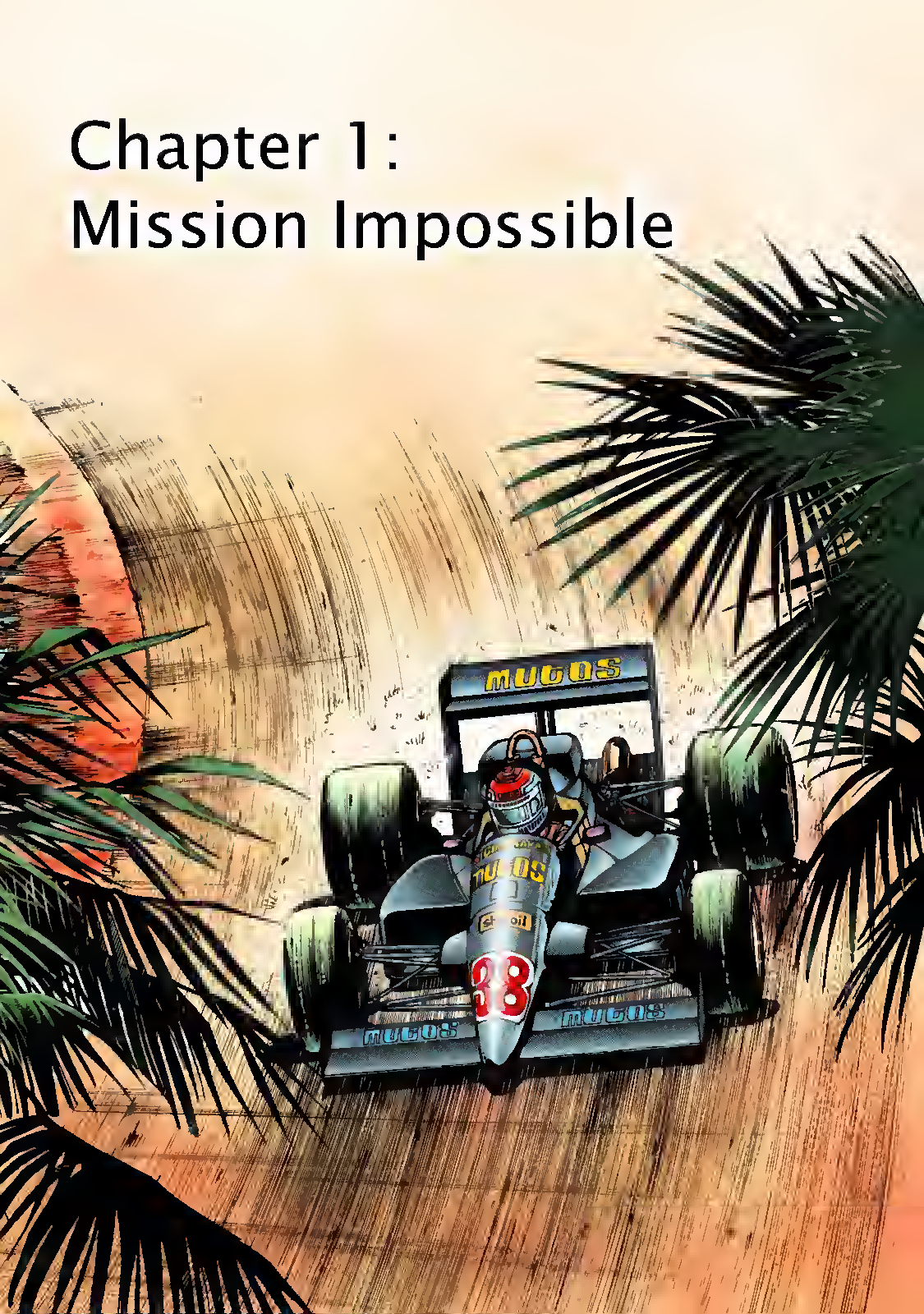
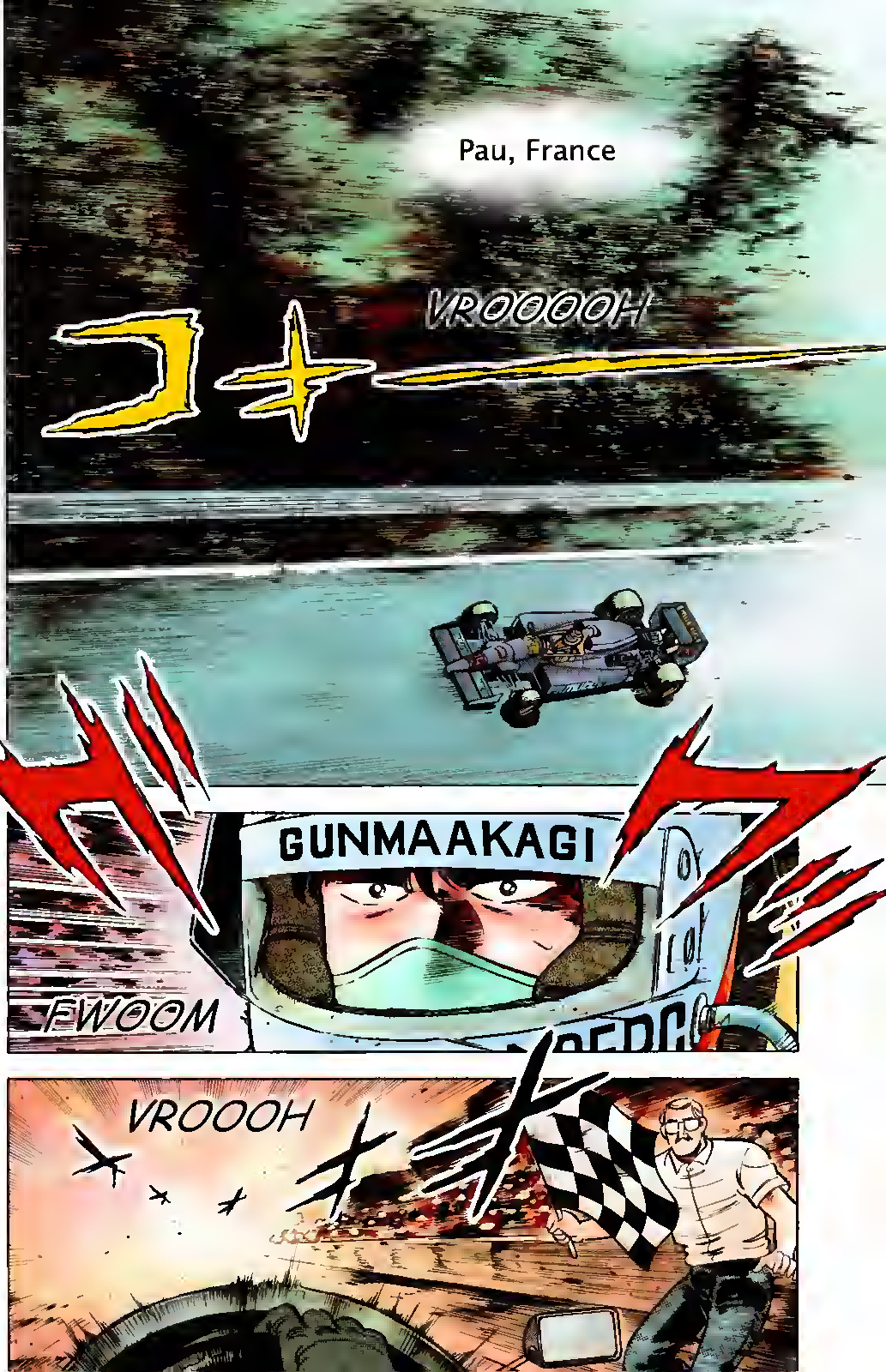
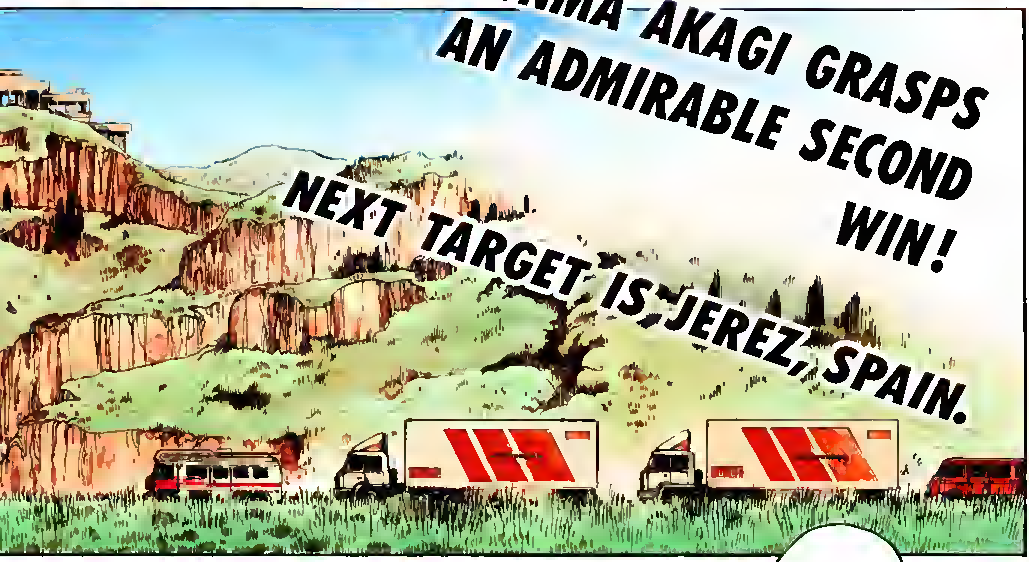
Chapter 1: Mission Impossible
Chapter 2: A Fresh Start
Chapter 3: The Inevitable
Chapter 4: Restless Mind
Chapter 5: We Meet Again
Chapter 6: Perfection
Chapter 7: When Time Stands Still
Chapter 8: Betrayal
Chapter 9: Luck with Women
Chapter 10: Pipe Dream
Chapter 11: Changing Tides
Chapter 12: A Lifelong Friend

Chapter 1:
Mission Impossible



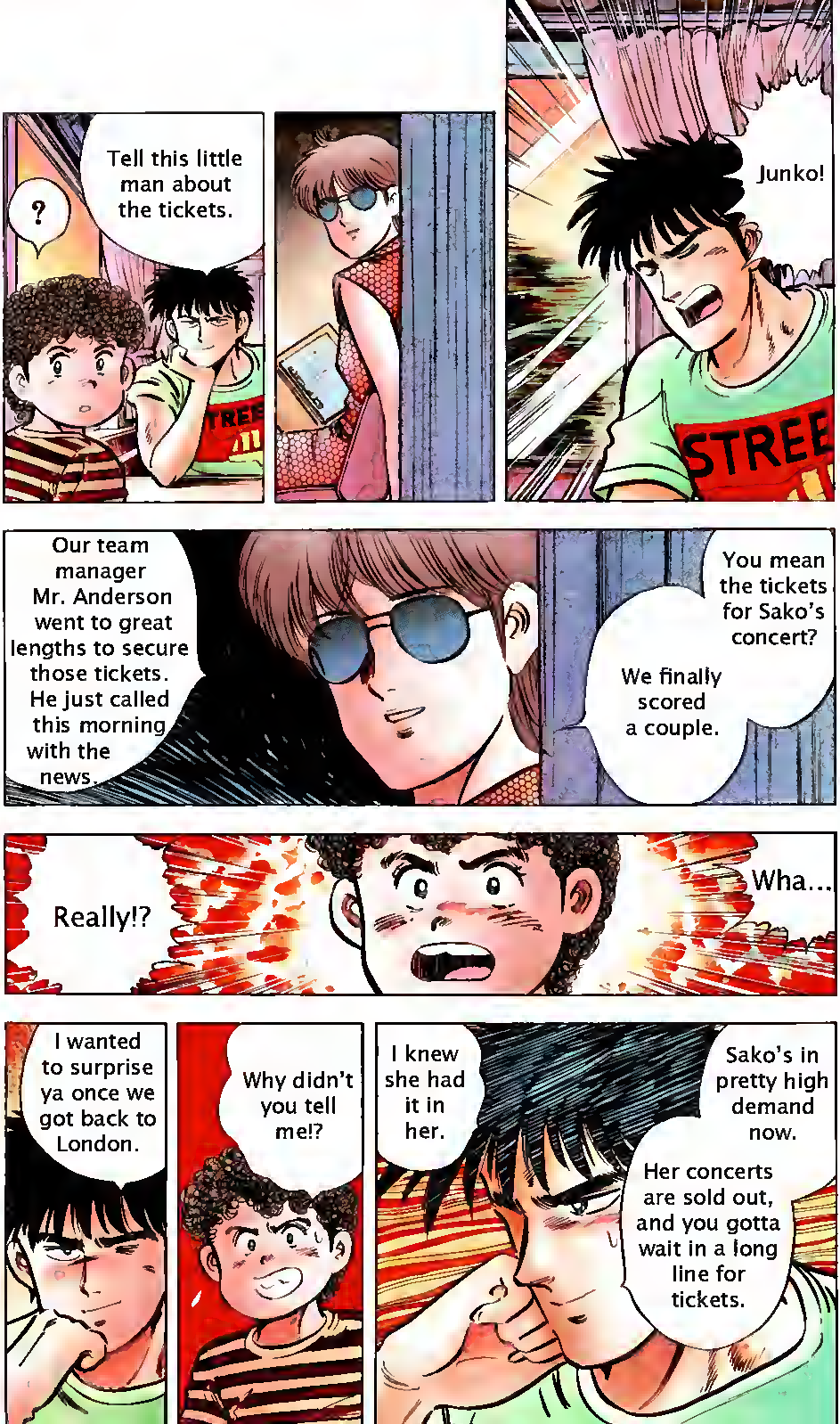

Pau, France
VROOOOH
GUNMAAKAGI
FWOOM
VROOOH

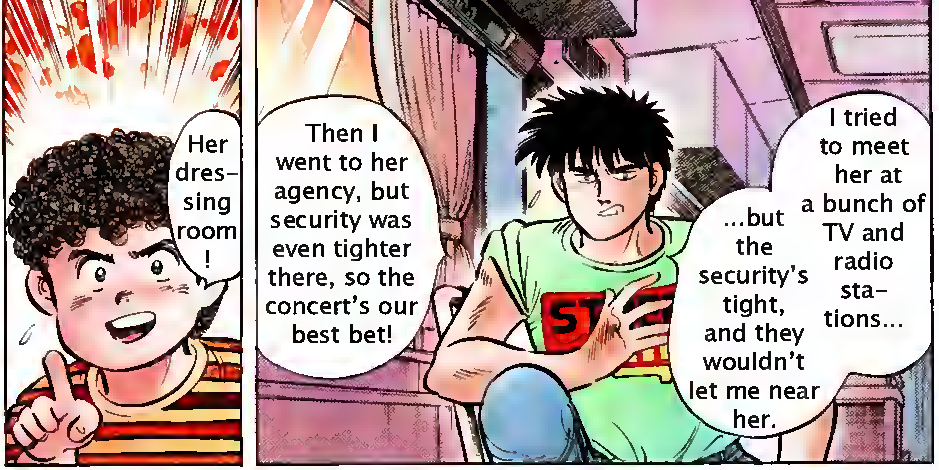
International F3000
JAPANESE
GUNMA
WON AT POUX!
AVON

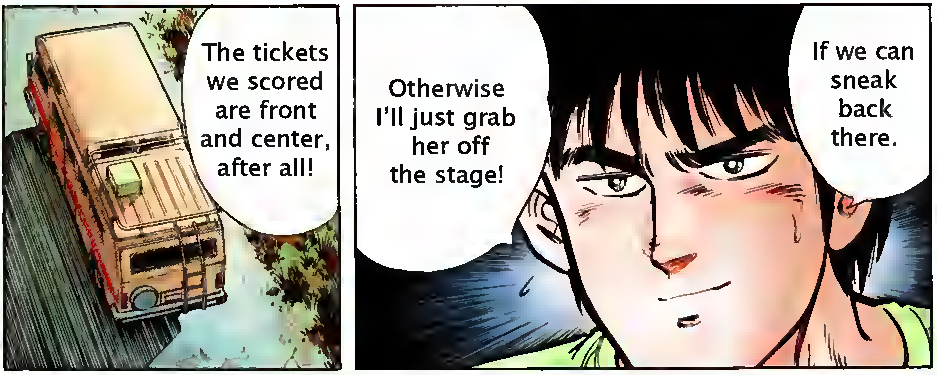

GUNMA AKAGI GRASPS
AN ADMIRABLE SECOND
WIN!
NEXT TARGET IS JEREZ, SPAIN.

Hey,
Gunma...
Why don't
we hurry up
and start
looking for
Sako?

Now I got Jerez comin' up in Spain. Man...!
I was only able to stay in London for a week last time.
Easier said than done. I've been busy with Vallelunga, then Pau...
Goin' to Italy, then comin' here to France.
I won't count on you any-more, then!
I get it. You're not really serious about looking for her!
I'll be in Jerez for four days, so maybe 10 days in London.
What about this time?
Hey...
I'm not going with you to Jerez! You hear!?
I'm gonna stay in London and look for Sako!


Tell this little man about the tickets.
?
Junko!
Our team manager Mr. Anderson went to great lengths to secure those tickets. He just called this morning with the news.
You mean the tickets for Sako's concert?
We finally scored a couple.
Really!?
Wha...
I wanted to surprise ya once we got back to London.
Why didn't you tell me!?
I knew she had it in her.
Sako's in pretty high demand now.
Her concerts are sold out, and you gotta wait in a long line for tickets.


Her dressing room!
Then I went to her agency, but security was even tighter there, so the concert's our best bet!
...but the security's tight, and they wouldn't let me near her.
I tried to meet her at a bunch of TV and radio stations...


The tickets we scored are front and center, after all!
Otherwise I'll just grab her off the stage!
If we can sneak back there.

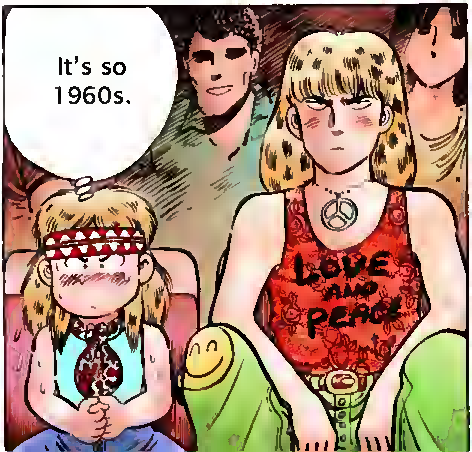
London
ODEON
CLUB DELI
CHARLIE CHESTER CASINO
KENNEX
Les Misérables

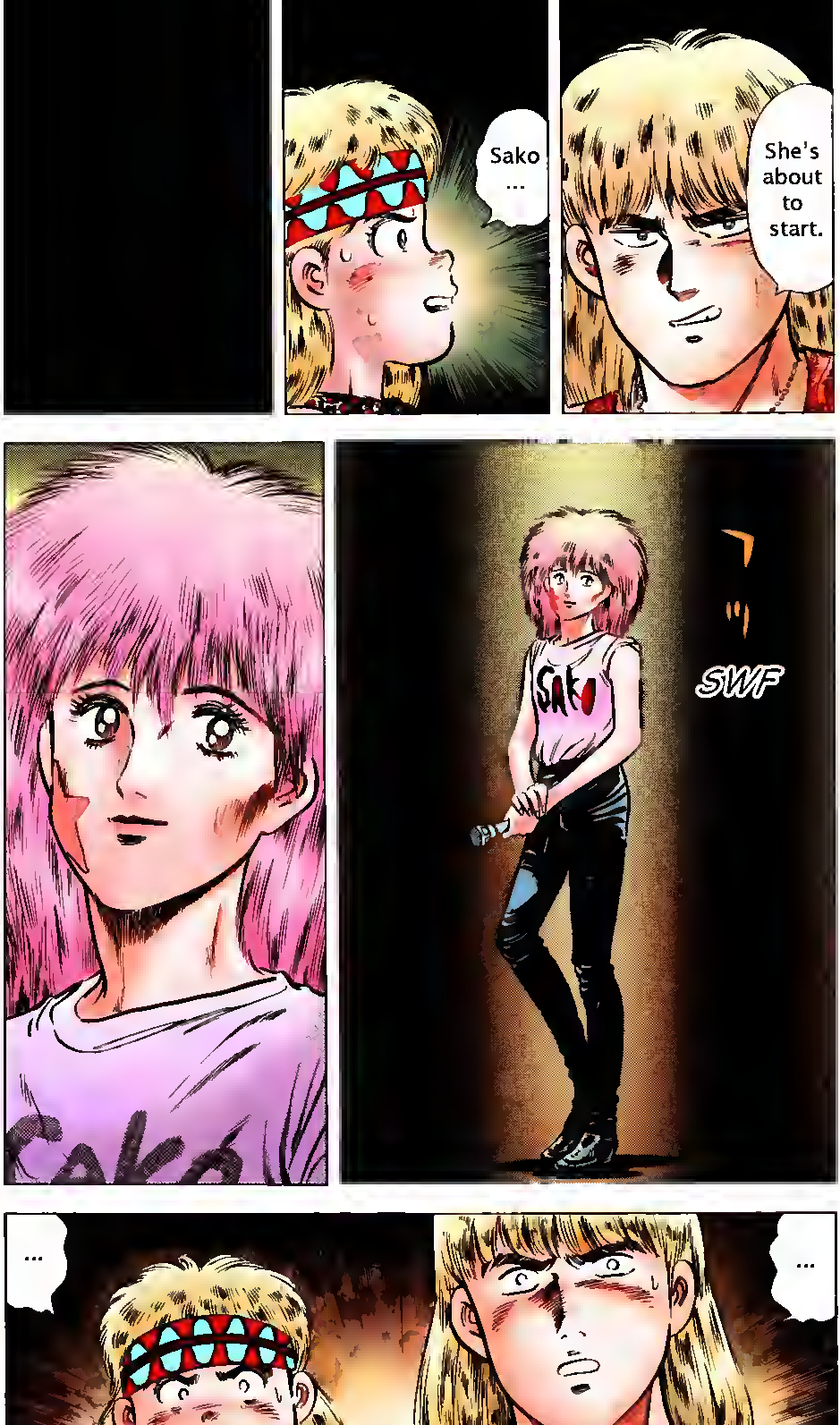
YAK
YAK

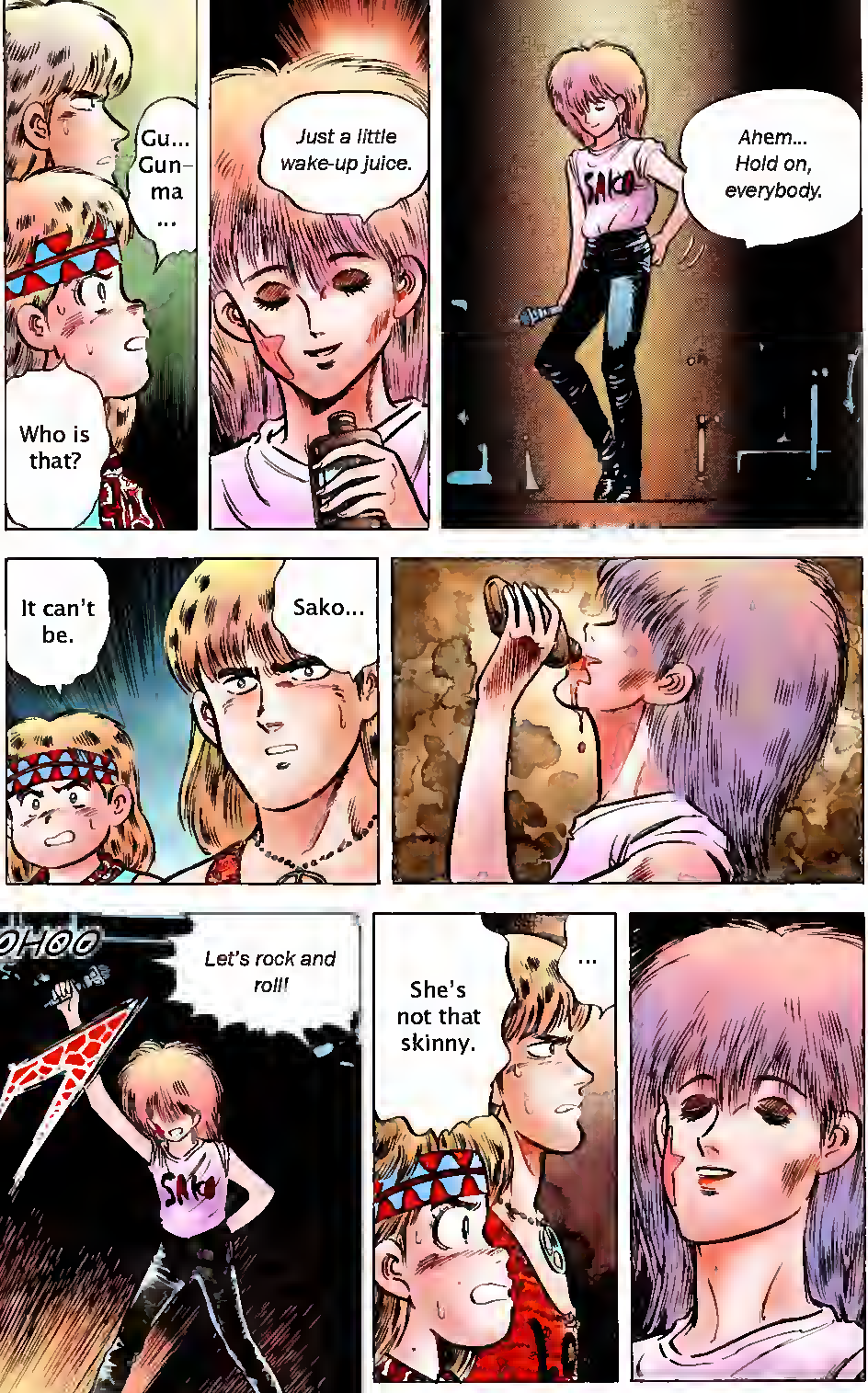
SAKO
LIVE
LOVING ARMS
THE BEST OF
TION

So Sako don't notice us and run away.

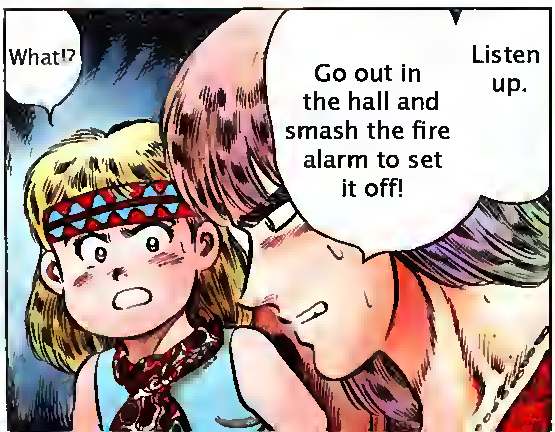
Why do we have to dress like this?
It's weird.
YAK
YAK
YAK
MURMUR
MURMUR

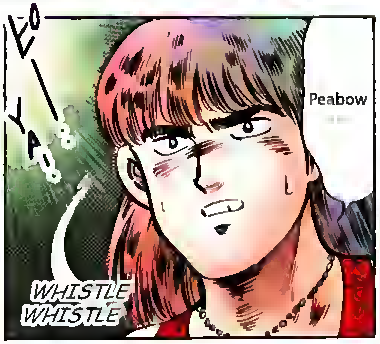

It's so 1960s.
LOVE AND PEACE

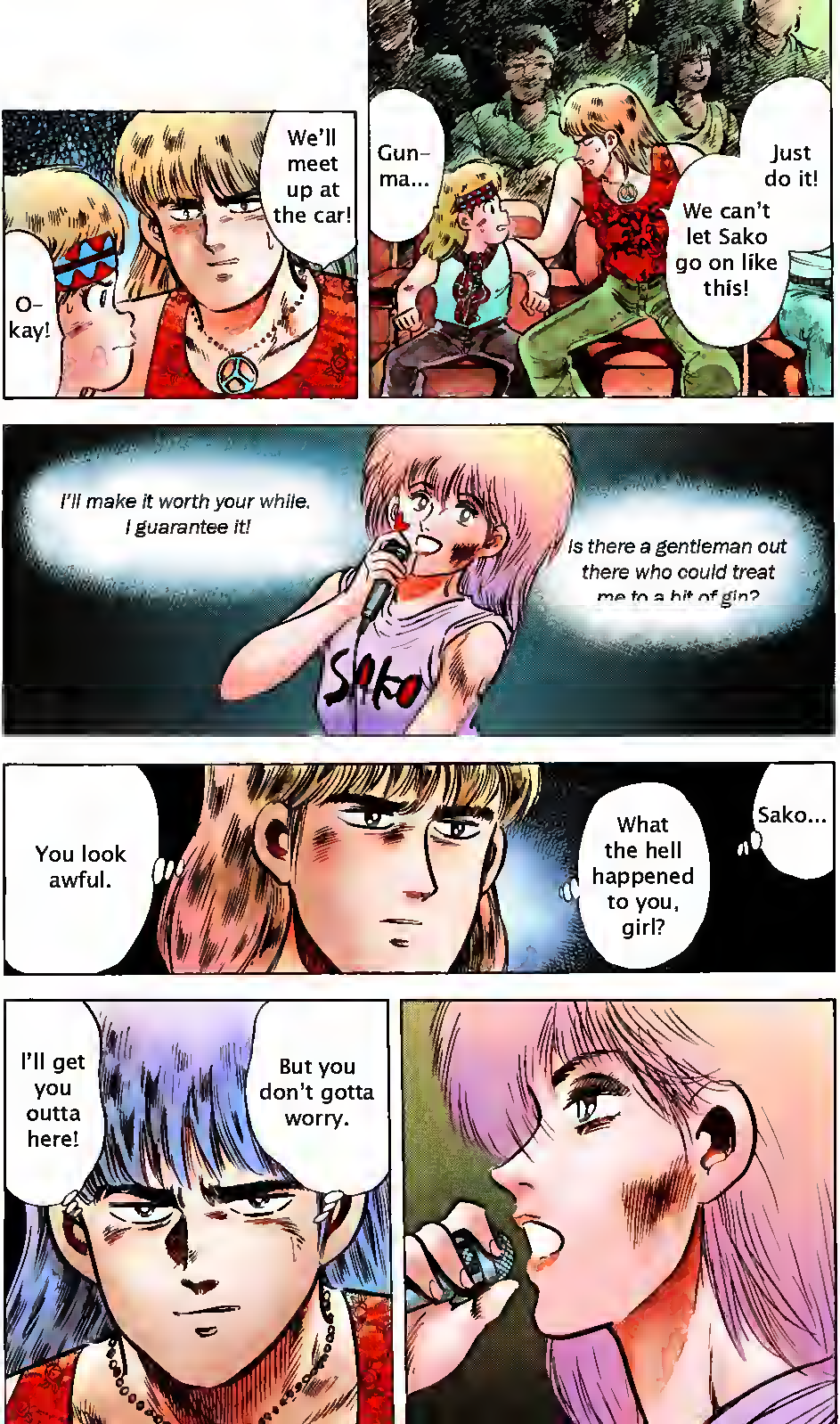

Sako
...
She's about to start.
SAKO
SWF
...
...


Gu... Gunma ...
Who is that?
Just a little wake-up juice.
Ahem... Hold on, everybody.
SAKO
It can't be.
Sako...
WOOHOO
Let's rock and roll!
SAKO
She's not that skinny.
...

SAKO
What happened to her, Gunma?
What do you think Gunma?
Or the make-up?
Is it the lights that make her look like that?

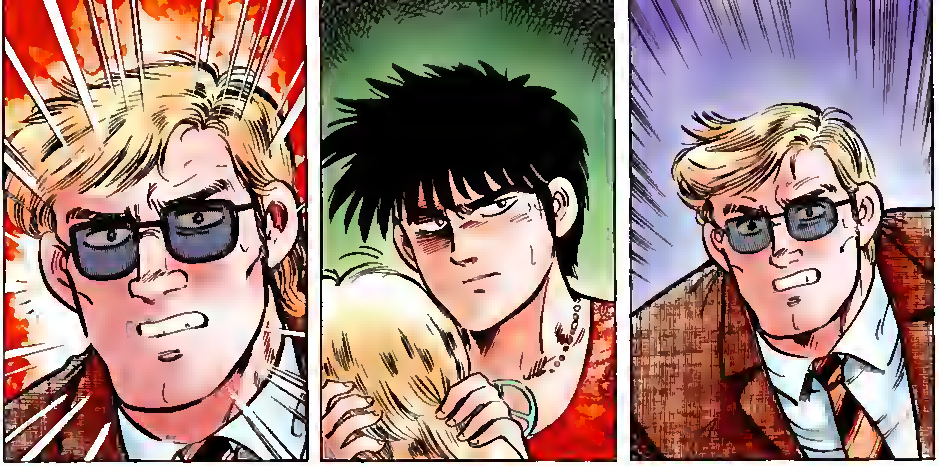

What!?
Go out in the hall and smash the fire alarm to set it off!
Listen up.

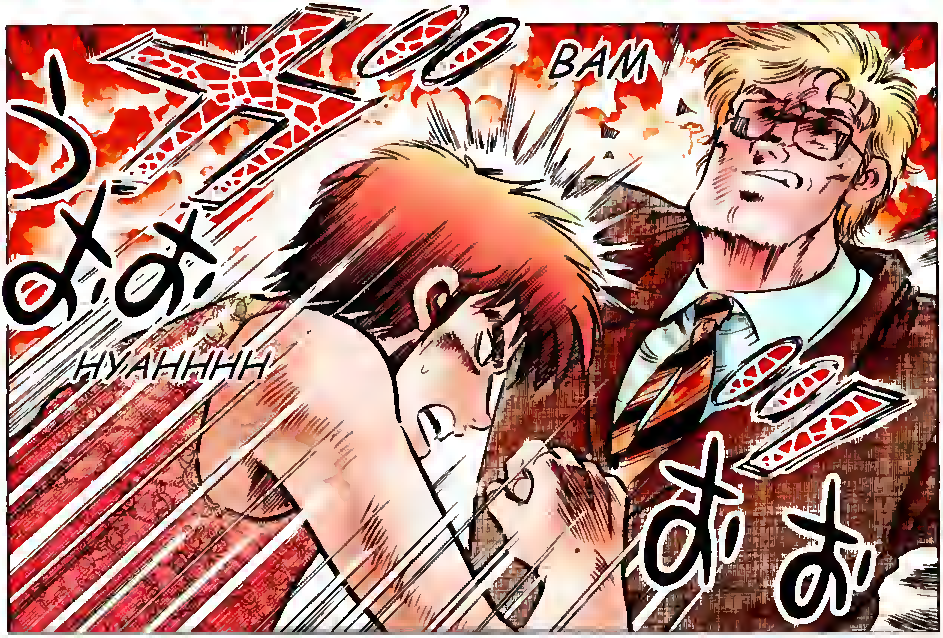

Peabow
WHISTLE
WHISTLE

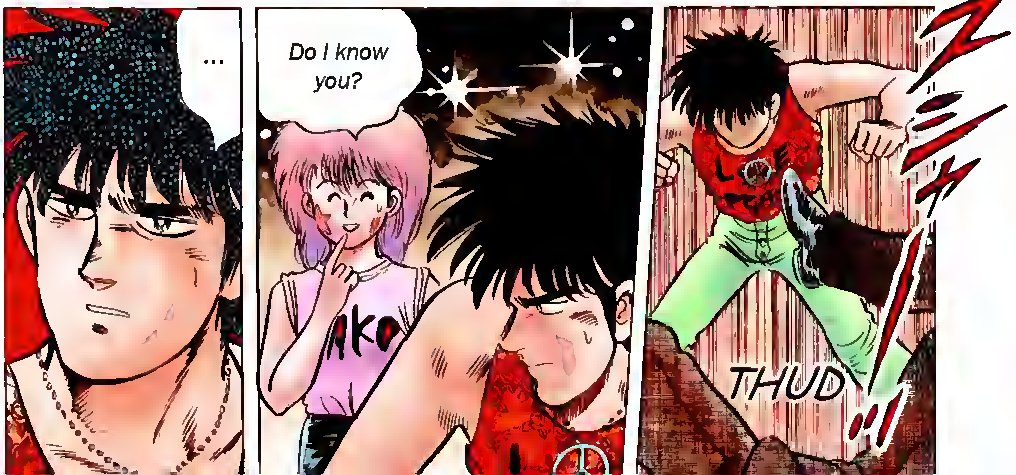

We'll meet up at the car!
O-kay!
Gun-ma...
Just do it!
We can't let Sako go on like this!
I'll make it worth your while. I guarantee it!
Is there a gentleman out there who could treat me to a bit of gin?
Sako
You look awful.
What the hell happened to you, girl?
Sako...
I'll get you outta here!
But you don't gotta worry.

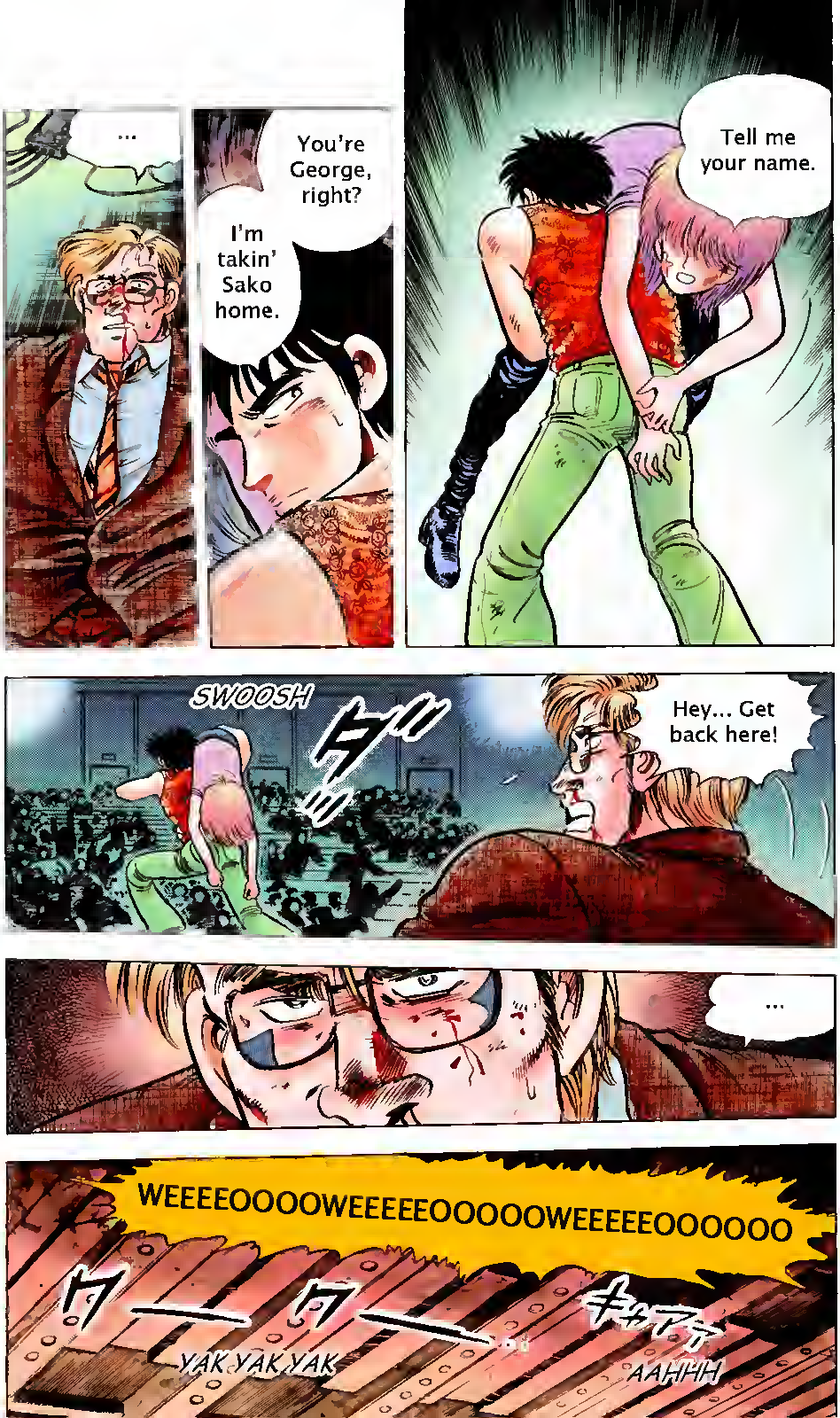
BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP
What the devil is that!?
Something's happened!
I think it's the fire alarm
Fire?
Ahhhhh!
CHATTER
CHATTER

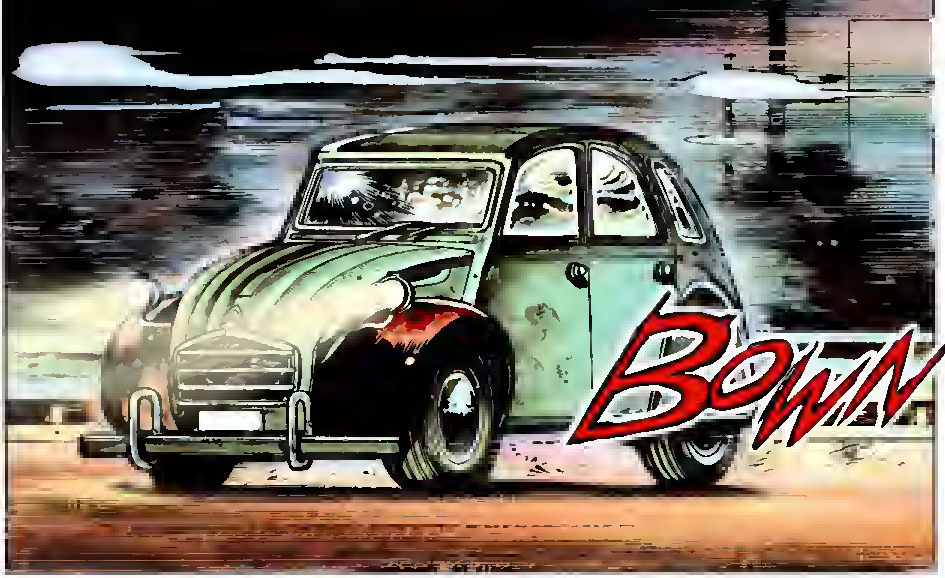
Stay calm!
?
HELLLP
AAAAH
AHHH
Where's the emergency exit!?
Everyone out!
WEEEEOOOOWEEEEEOOOOOWEEEEEOOOOOO
Ahhhhh!
Move it!
It's me! Can't you tell!?
Sako!
Ha ha ha! Far out, man!
!?
What's going on in here!?
What set off the fire!?
!!
Sako!
SWOOSH
Who the devil are you?
You're comin' with me!
I don't know you! Let go!

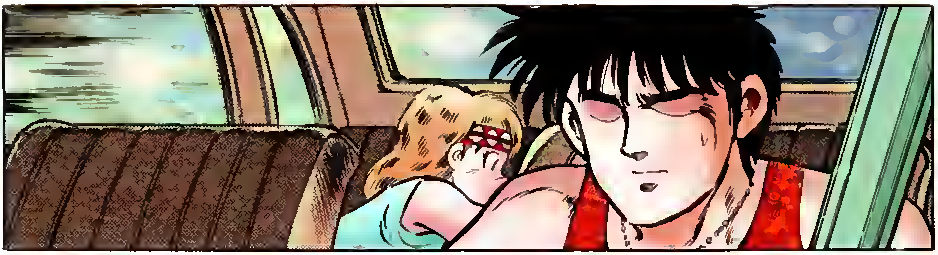



BAM
HYAHHHH

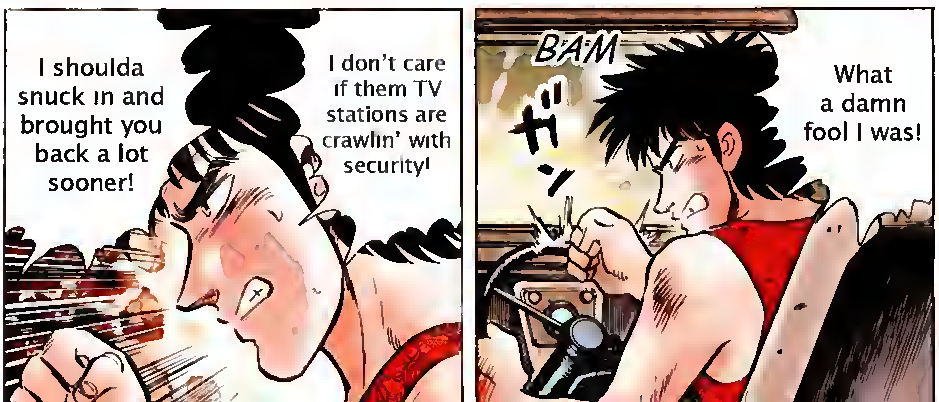

...
Do I know you?
THUD


...
You're George, right?
I'm takin' Sako home.
Tell me your name.
SWOOSH
Hey... Get back here!
...
WEEEEOOOOWEEEEEOOOOOWEEEEEOOOOOO
YAK YAK YAK
AAHHH

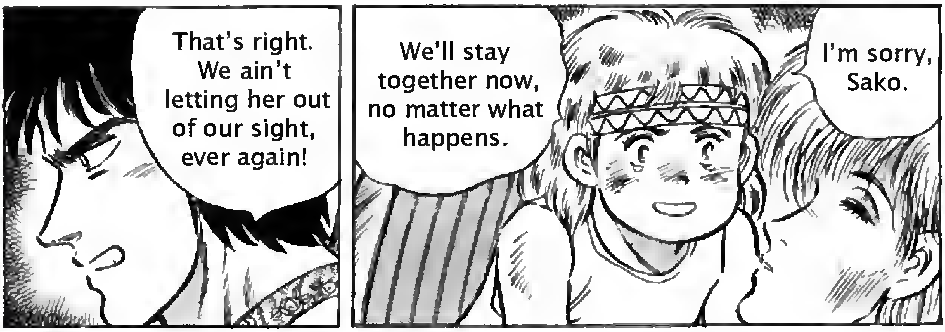

BOWN

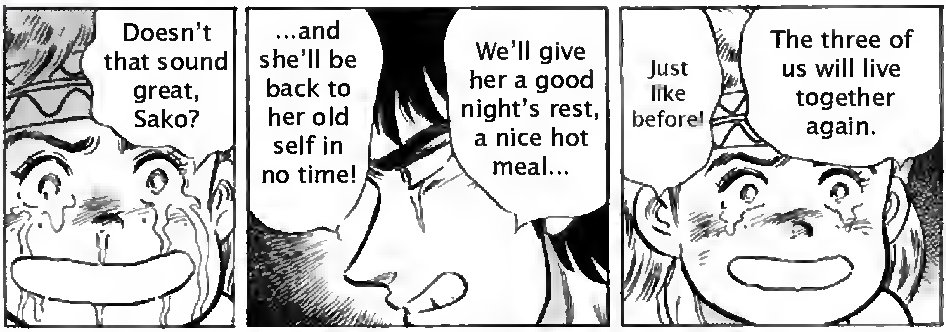


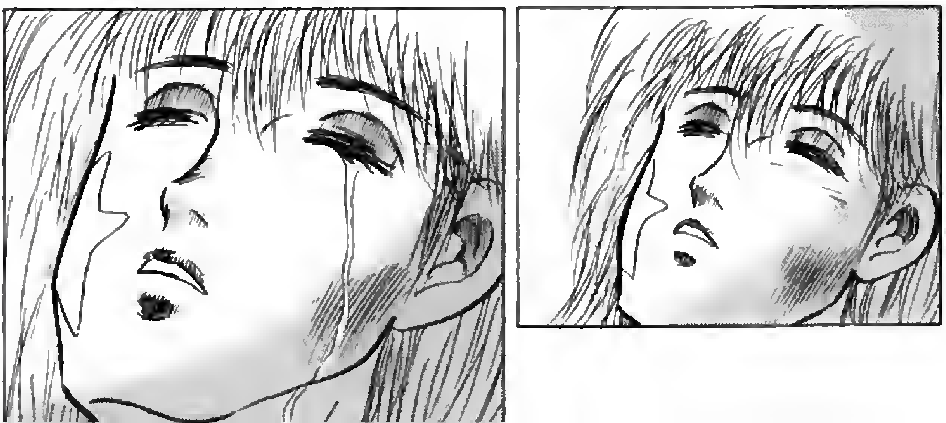
It's me, Peabow! Please say something!
...
What happened to you?
Sako, Sako...


I shoulda snuck in and brought you back a lot sooner!
I don't care if them TV stations are crawlin' with security!
BAM
ガン
What a damn fool I was!

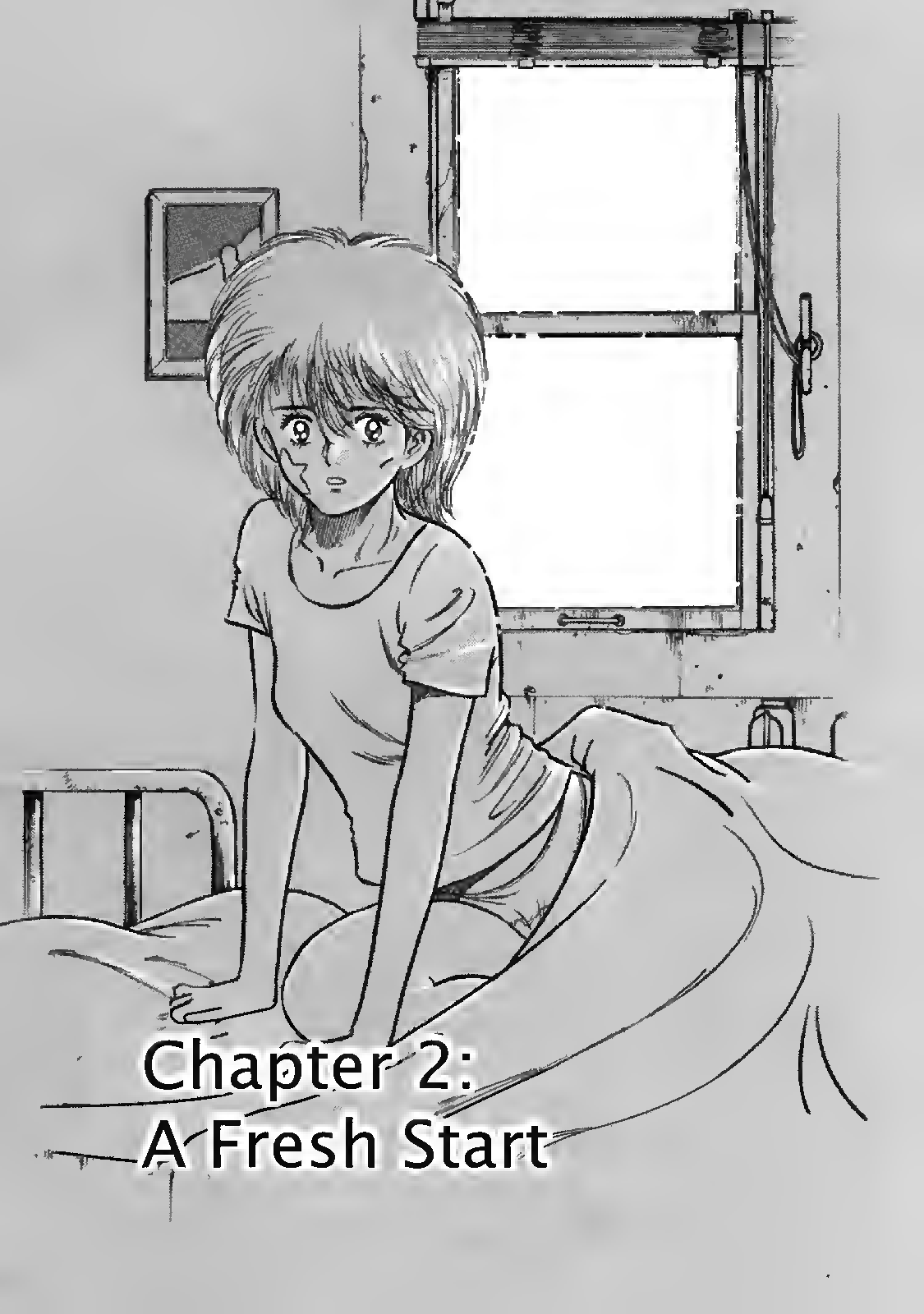
She reeks of alcohol. Probably got a lot in her system.
Good, she needs it.
Hey, she's asleep.
SAKO


That's right. We ain't letting her out of our sight, ever again!
We'll stay together now, no matter what happens.
I'm sorry, Sako.

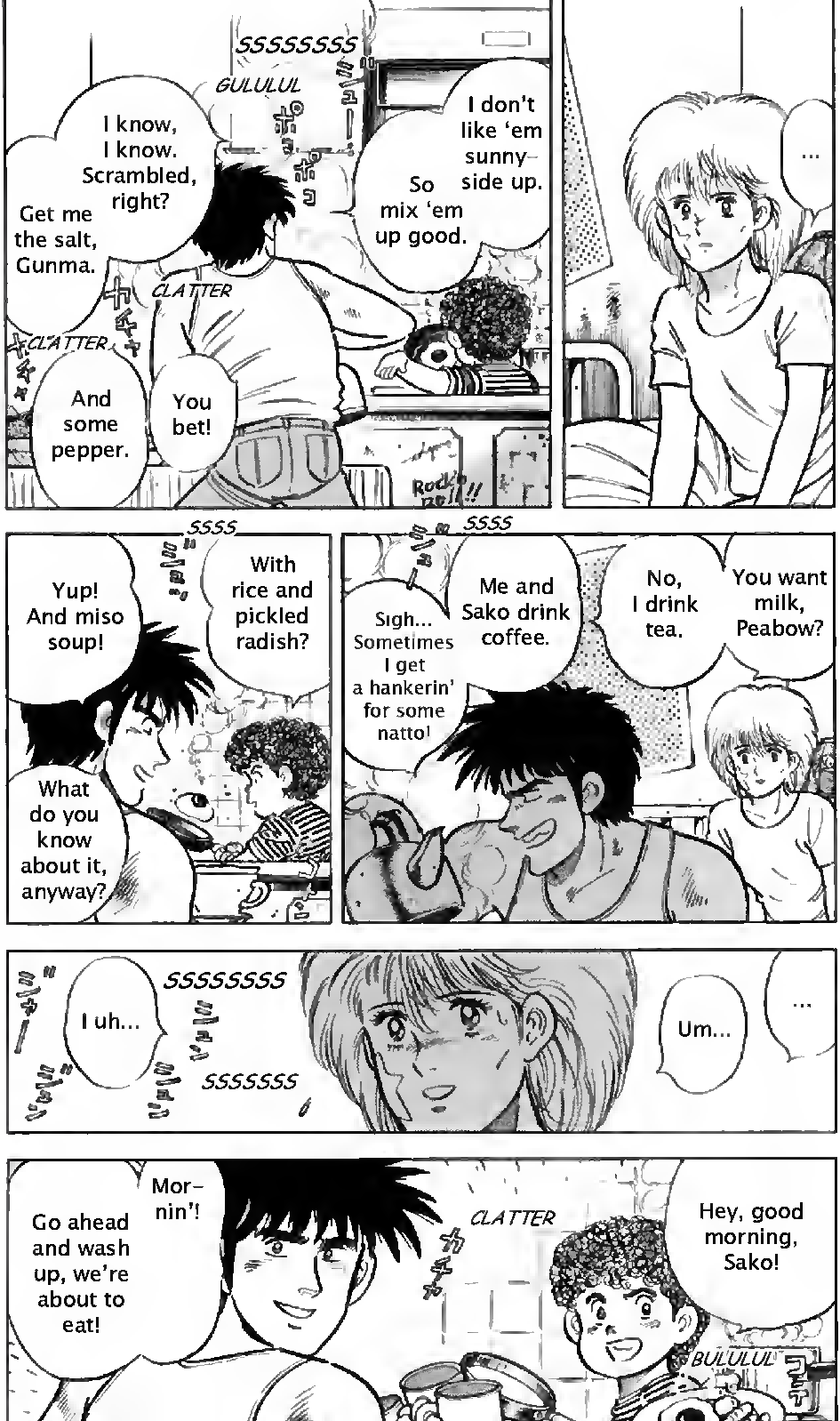

Doesn't that sound great, Sako?
...and she'll be back to her old self in no time!
We'll give her a good night's rest, a nice hot meal...
Just like before!
The three of us will live together again.

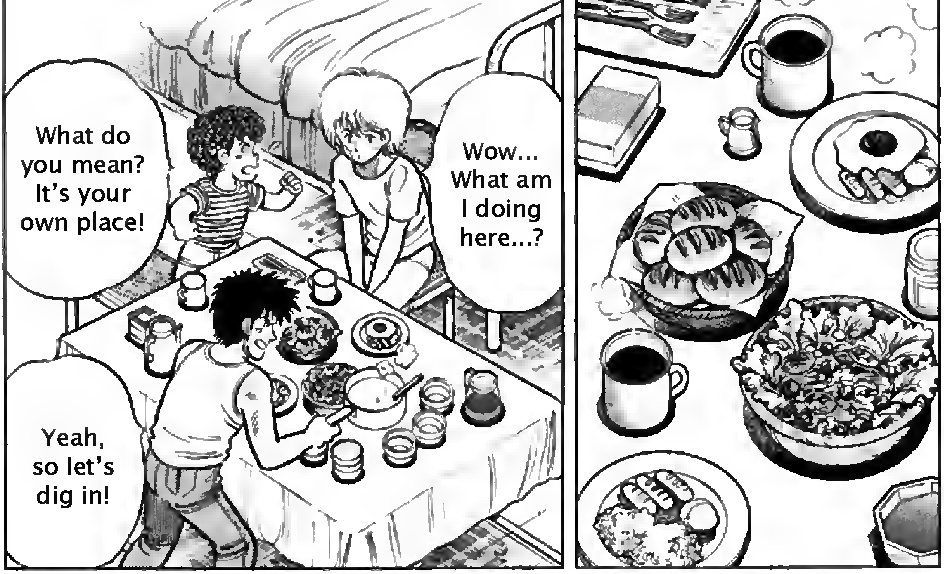


Let's hurry home!
Back to our apartment!
mazda

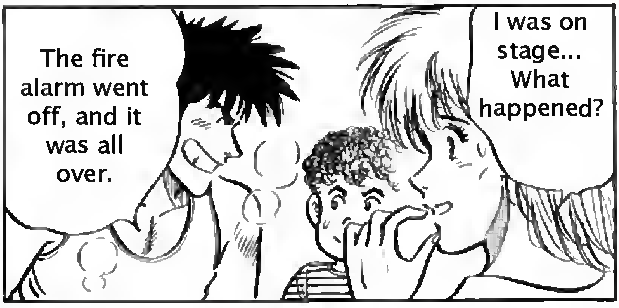


Chapter 2:
A Fresh Start


SSSSSSSS
GULULUL
I know, I know. Scrambled, right?
Get me the salt, Gunma.
CLATTER
CLATTER
And some pepper.
You bet!
So mix 'em up good.
I don't like 'em sunny-side up.
...
SSSS
Yup! And miso soup!
With rice and pickled radish?
What do you know about it, anyway?
SSSS
Sigh... Sometimes I get a hankerin' for some natto!
Me and Sako drink coffee.
No, I drink tea.
You want milk, Peabow?
I uh...
SSSSSSSS
SSSSSSS
Um...
...
Mor-nin'!
Go ahead and wash up, we're about to eat!
CLATTER
Hey, good morning, Sako!
BULULUL

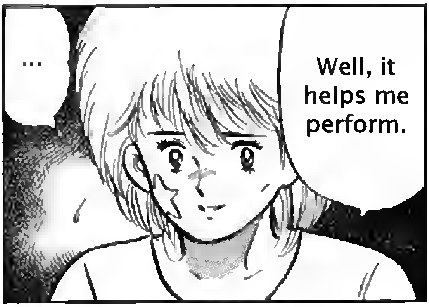

What do you mean? It's your own place!
Wow... What am I doing here...?
Yeah, so let's dig in!

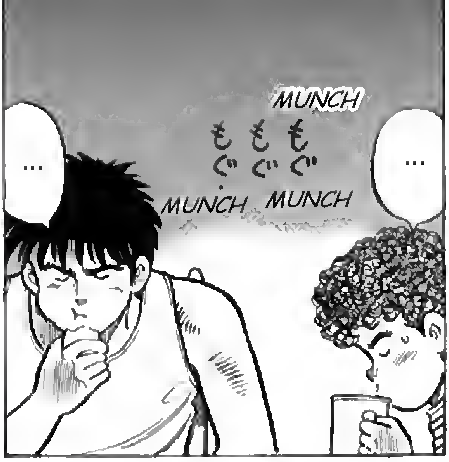
Then...
...that wasn't a dream.


I was on stage... What happened?
The fire alarm went off, and it was all over.

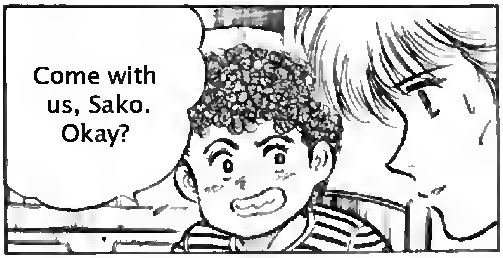
And you were wasted. You always drink that much on stage?
Of course not! Me and Peabow plucked you off the stage!

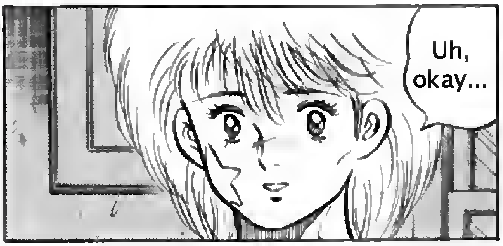
What's wrong? Eat!


...
Well, it helps me perform.

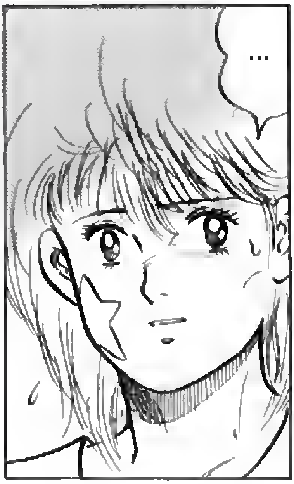

MUNCH
もぐもぐ
MUNCH MUNCH
...
...

I just left the both of you without saying anything.
Aren't you mad at me...?


Come with us, Sako. Okay?

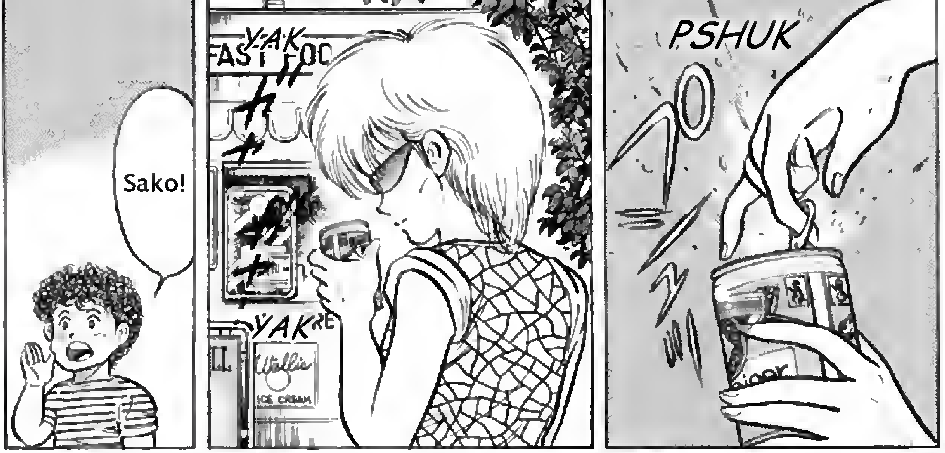

Uh, okay...

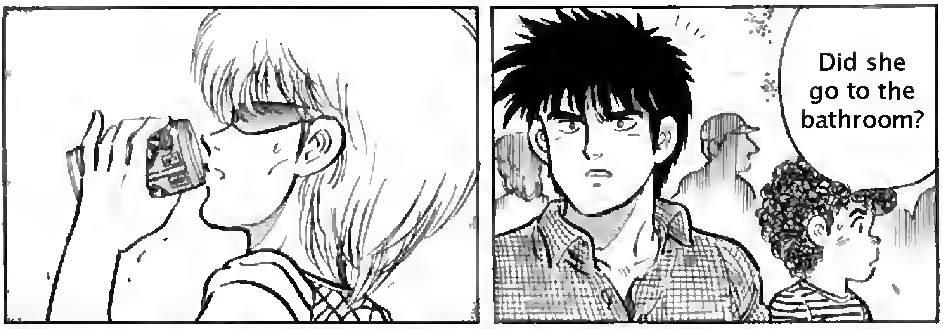
The zoo? That's kid stuff...
I got an idea! Let's go to the zoo!
Oh well. Let's do it!

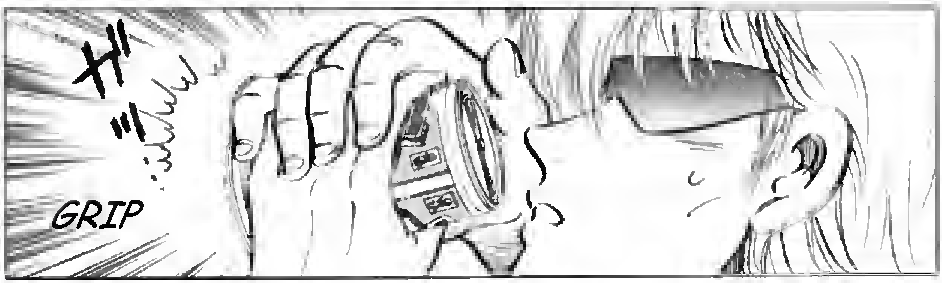

...

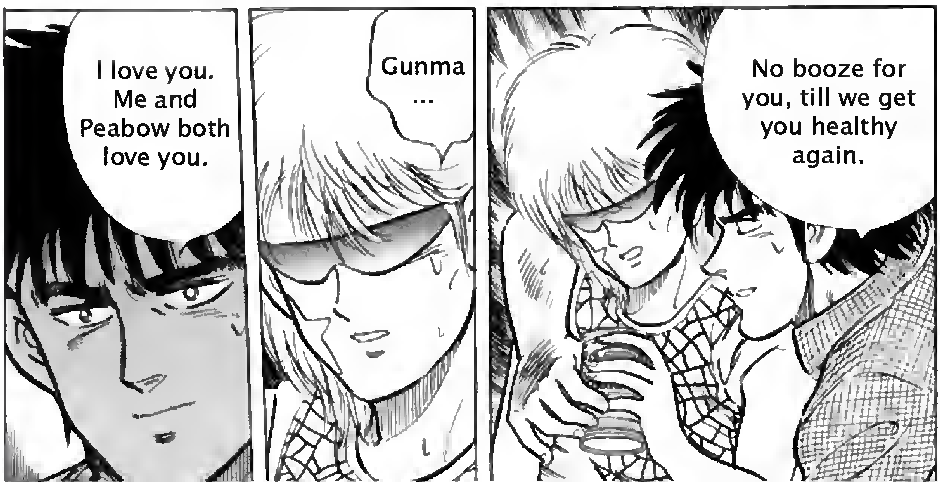
...I knew I had to take you home, no matter what it took.
When I saw your face up there...
So I'd say we're even.
Anyway, we ruined your concert.
And we made a decision last night, that we'll never let you leave again, even if you kick and scream. Sorry, but that's how it's gonna be.

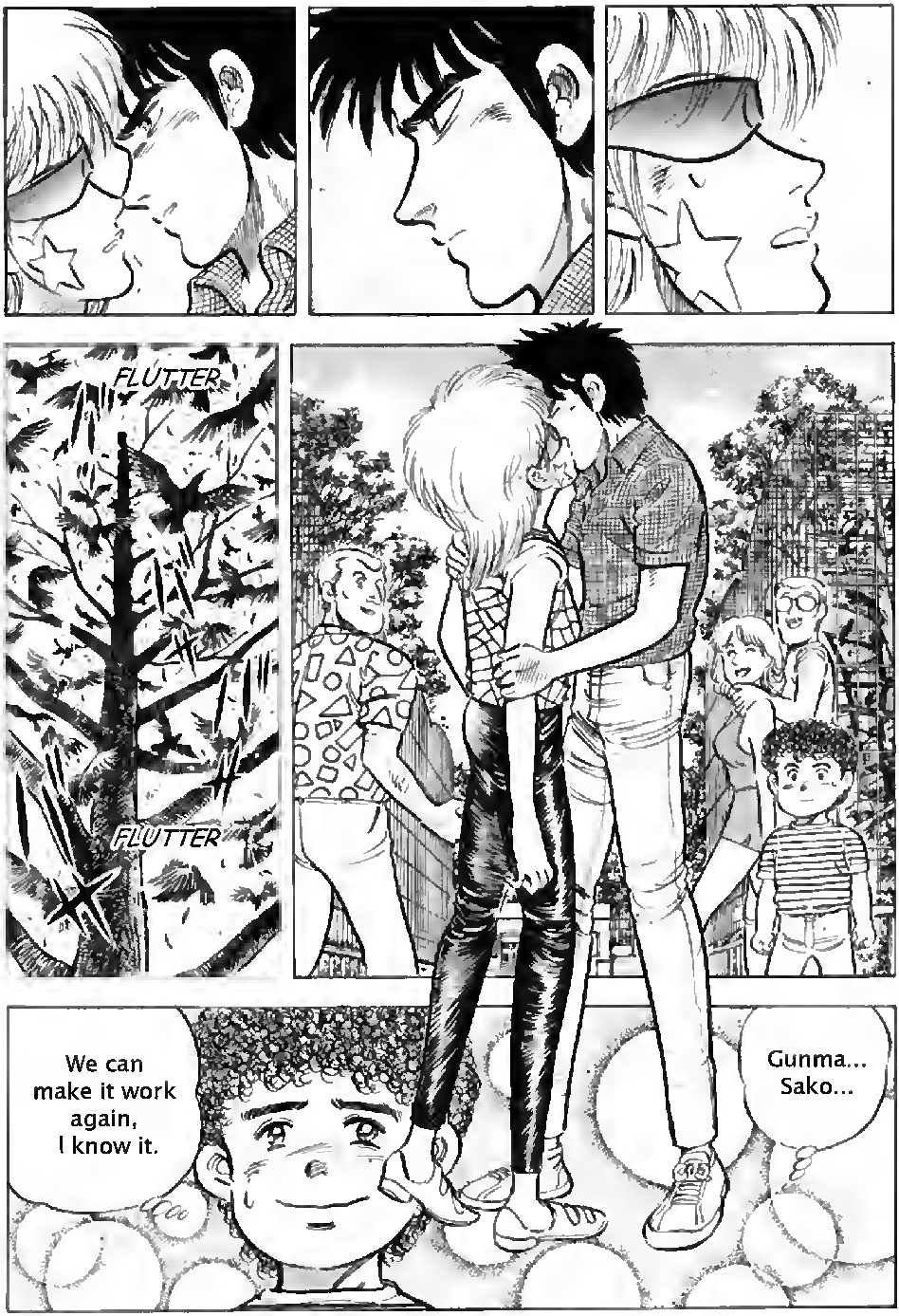
CAW
CAW
CHIRRRP
CHEEP
CHEEP
LONDON NO
DOKOKANO
ZOO
Whoaaa!
TUK
TUK
TUK
TUK
TUK
TUK
TUK
TUK


Sako!
YAK
FAST FOOD
YAKULT
Wallis
ICE CREAM
PSHUK


Did she go to the bathroom?

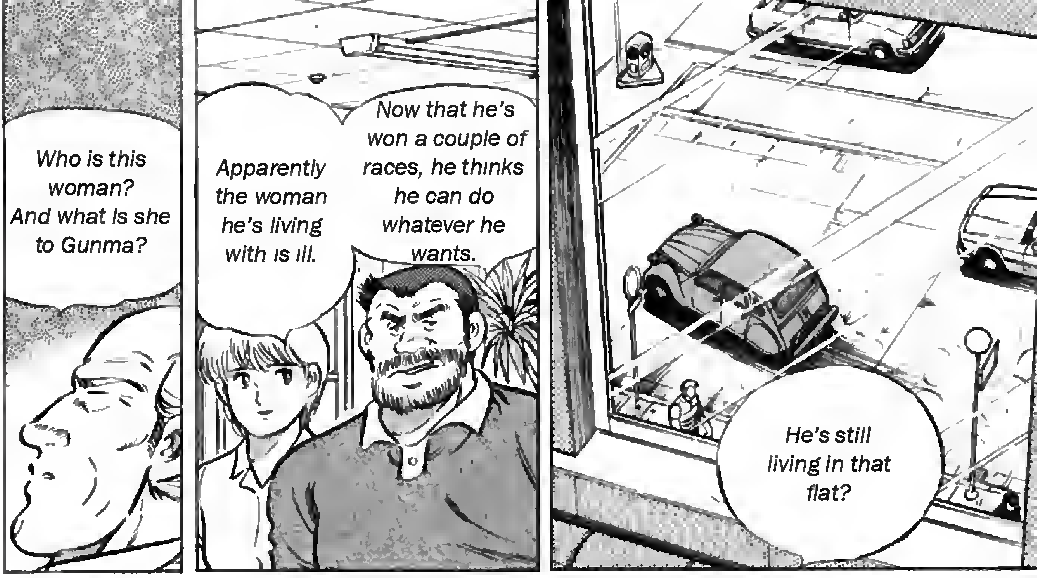

GRIP

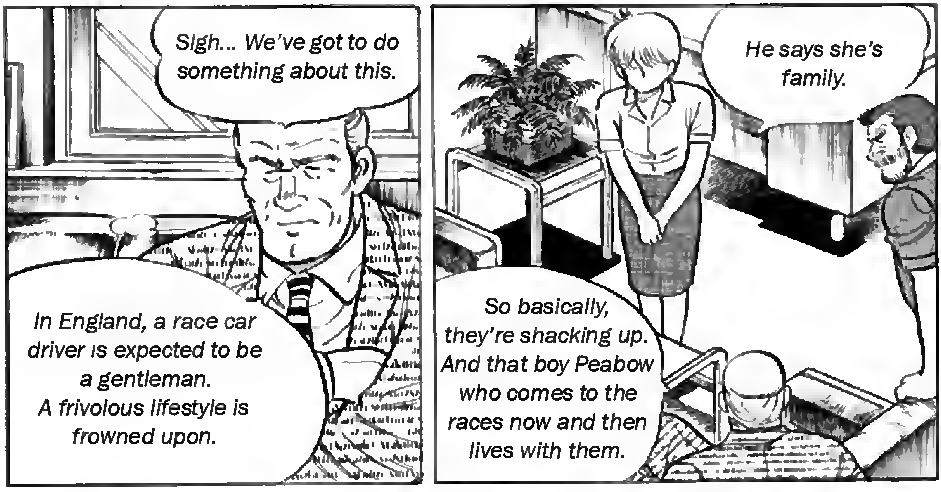

I love you. Me and Peabow both love you.
Gunma ...
No booze for you, till we get you healthy again.


FLUTTER
FLUTTER
We can make it work again, I know it.
Gunma... Sako...

HANCE
RACING
FFICE
What are you thinking, Gunma?
You want to pass on Spain!?
And if you just put it like this ... There, you see?
PLAN CE
Ha ha ha! You're ado-rable, Junko!
I got a little somethin' to take care of, that's all.
Junko! Get in here and translate!
I can't understand your Japanese! Yak yak yak!
I can't tell nobody. It's personal business.
At least gimme a reason!

See ya later!
That's it!
Tell Hans and Orman that I ain't gonna race in Spain 'cause Sako's in bad shape right now!
I'm sorry... What happened?
Gunma ...
...
SLAM
No sweat.
Yup.
Did you get some time off?


Who is this woman? And what is she to Gunma?
Apparently the woman he's living with is ill.
Now that he's won a couple of races, he thinks he can do whatever he wants.
He's still living in that flat?


Sigh... We've got to do something about this.
In England, a race car driver is expected to be a gentleman. A frivolous lifestyle is frowned upon.
He says she's family.
So basically, they're shacking up. And that boy Peabow who comes to the races now and then lives with them.

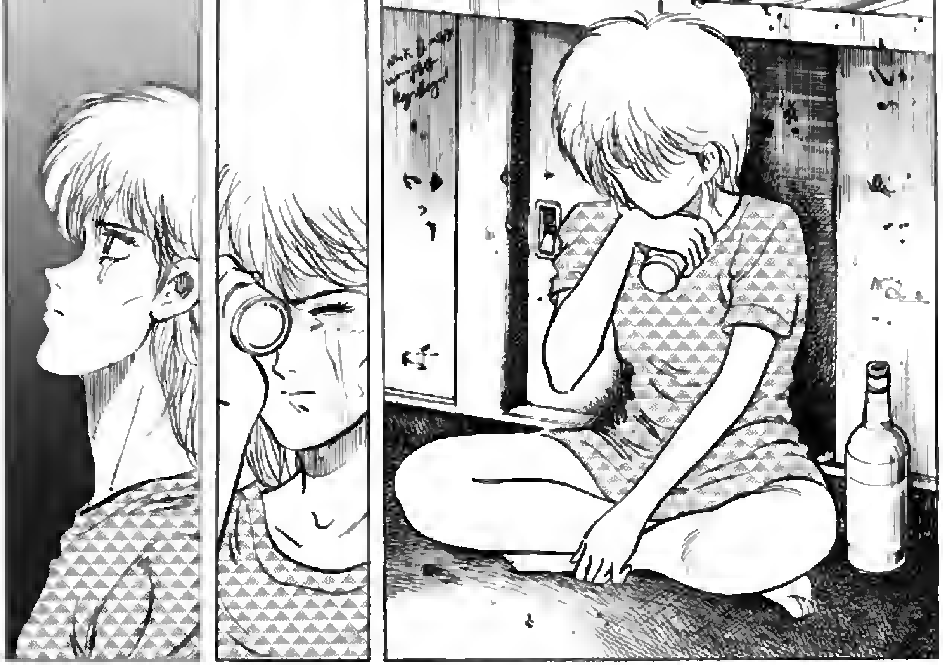
I'll try.
Could you convince him for us, Junko?
Now that he's up-and-coming, we're getting interview requests for him. For the team's sake, I can't let him sit out that race in Spain.

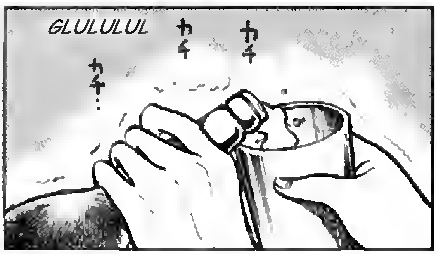
But to you, racing is...
Don't worry about it.
You can't just sit out a race, Gunma.
If you're worried about me, I'll be fine.
I'm plenty cheerful already.
Till you get back to your old, cheerful self, Sako.
Yup!
I never said I'm quittin', just takin' a break.
Like stuff about George, about your music, and what you really think of it all.
...
You sure don't look it.
More like a woman with a whole lot on her mind.
I don't know...
Well I do!

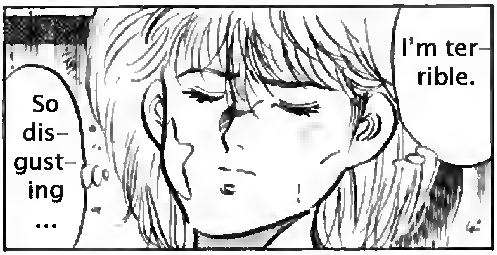
Ugh ...
Stop this... George ...
Sako...
Sako...
You're wonderful, Sako. Absolutely brilliant!
So pure, yet so dirty. Strong, yet fragile... Flexible, but rigid.
At one moment you're a full-grown woman, and the next you're a new-born baby. With the stubbornness of a boy, and the gentleness of a girl!
You're beautiful. Simply beautiful... Yesss...
I haven't got a lick of talent.
Just a pitiful, poor excuse for a man.
And I envy you. I'm overcome with jealousy.
That's why I can be so dirty with you. And you should be disgusted!
Do you realize what a terrible man I am? You should know this, Sako.
Please... stop...
I... hate this...
Despise me! Spit in my face!
Ridicule me for my short-comings, Sako!

I'm the only one who understands your gift.
But in spite of all my faults...
I can recognize your talent!
It takes a man like me to understand your talent, to develop it fully!
Drink your troubles away, Sako. I know you want to forget, and this is the perfect remedy.
Now drink to your heart's content.
It must be hard for you, being so lonely. Remember him and hate me... Hm hm hm...
And then, you sing!
!!
SHATTER
Damm it!

HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
Kaaaf-
oooh...
GULP
...it's got to be in here.
That cooking wine...
RUSTLE
RUSTLE

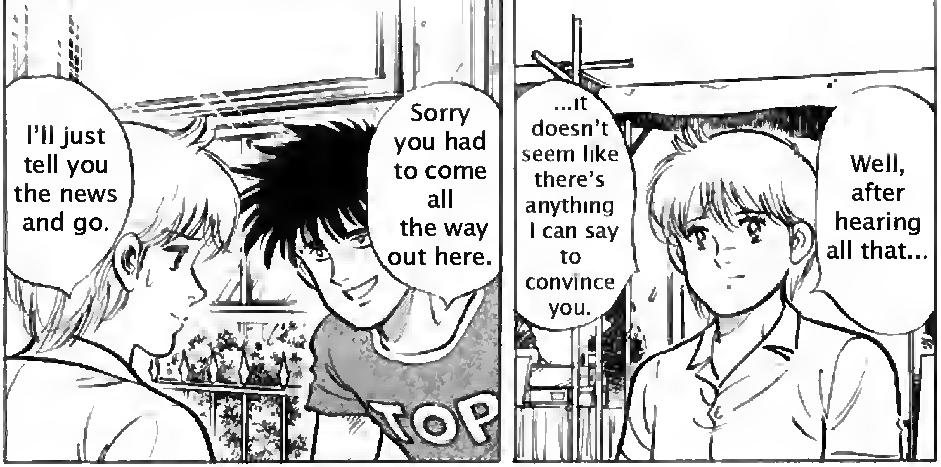


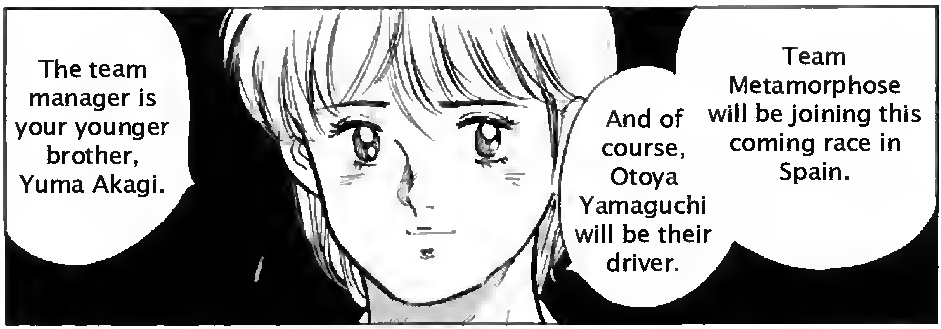

GLULULUL


I'm ter-
rible.
So dis-
gust-
ing
...

I don't know what to think anymore.
But now that I'm back, I think about George and my music.
When I'm with George, Gunma and Peabow are all I think about.

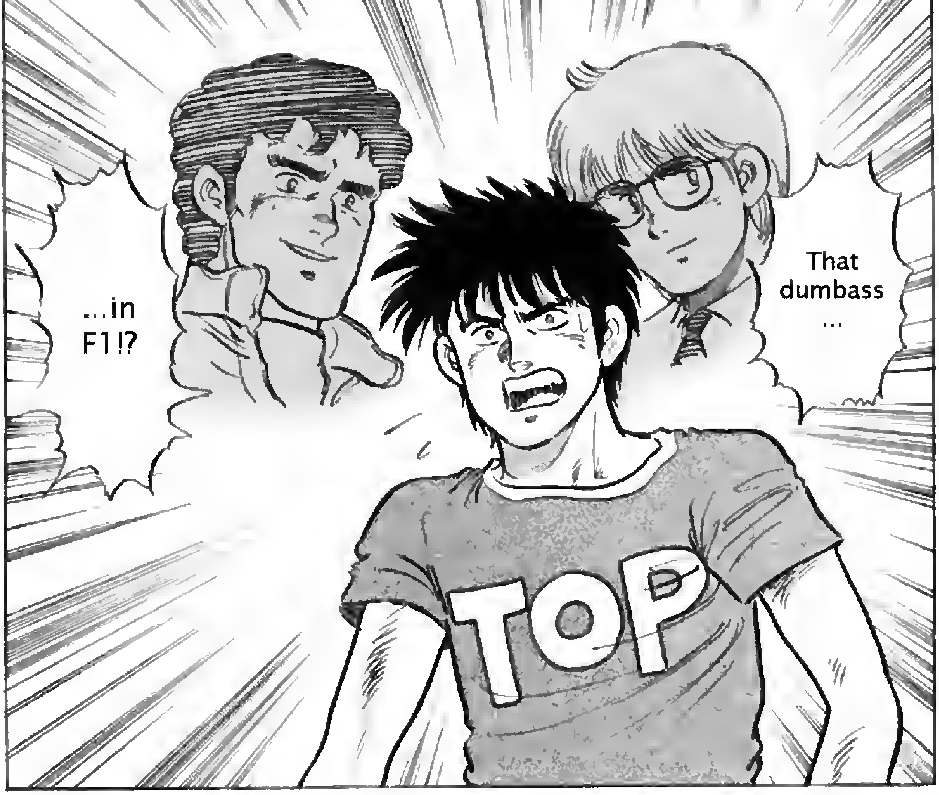
I'm sorry to intrude like this.
It's all right.
How's Sako doing?
I dun-no.
...
An ...
...alco-holic?
What!?
SCRATCH
SCRATCH
Seems like she's practically an alcoholic.
But why?
Figured it out this morning.
She was drinkin' our cooking wine last night in secret!
I can't let her outta my sight.
I'm sure Hans put you up to this, right? To get me back in the race?
...


I'll just tell you the news and go.
Sorry you had to come all the way out here.
...It doesn't seem like there's anything I can say to convince you.
Well, after hearing all that...


The team manager is your younger brother, Yuma Akagi.
And of course, Otoya Yamaguchi will be their driver.
Team Metamorphose will be joining this coming race in Spain.

...

Within the next year or two, Team Metamorphose will most likely be moving onto F1.
Uh-huh.
You serious?

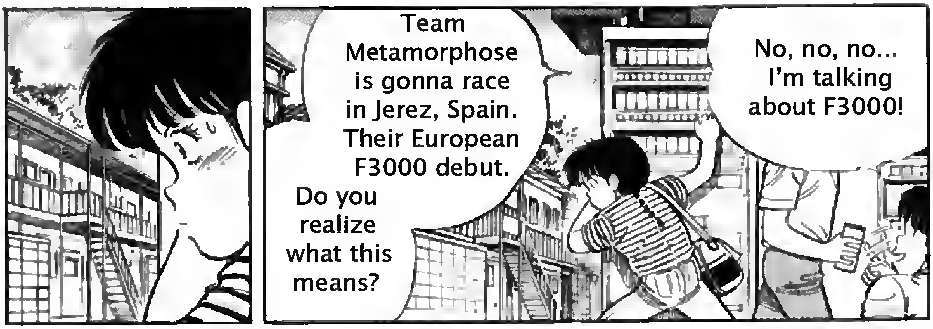

That dumbass...
...in F1!?
TOP

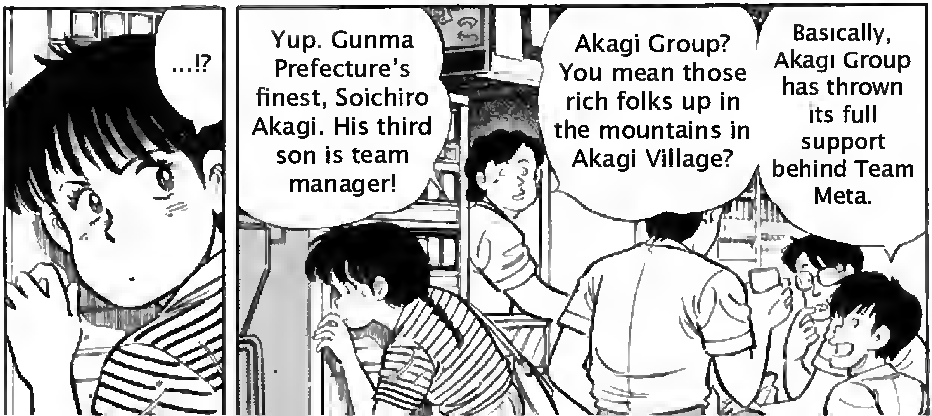
And one more thing.
Tamotsu said he's coming to watch the race in Spain.
Along with Kuroi, Yasu, and Auntie...

No...
...kidding?
TOP

Chapter 3:
The Inevitable

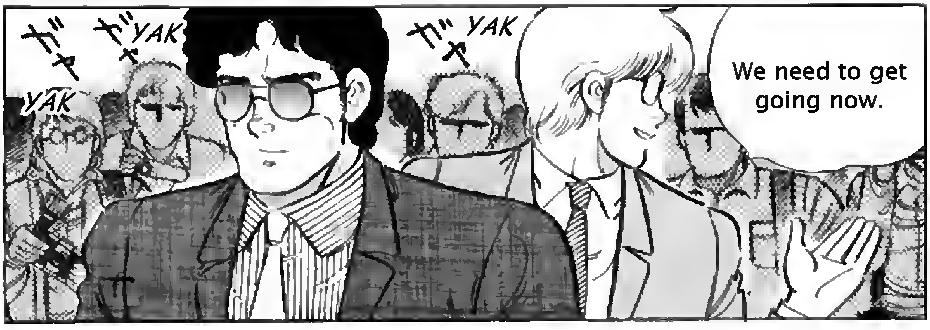
Motors-ports, man.
Haven't you been reading Racing Won?
Formula 1, right? Nakajima, Suzuki, Leyton House...
Pretty impressive.
What is?
CABIN
YAK


Team Metamorphose is gonna race in Jerez, Spain. Their European F3000 debut.
Do you realize what this means?
No, no, no... I'm talking about F3000!

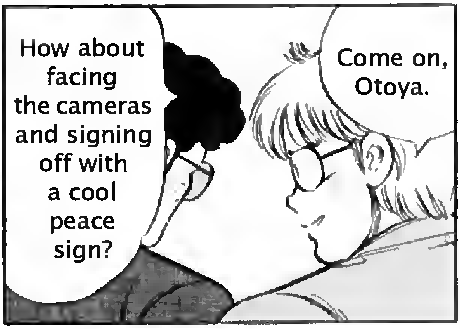

...!?
Yup. Gunma Prefecture's finest, Soichiro Akagi. His third son is team manager!
Akagi Group? You mean those rich folks up in the mountains in Akagi Village?
Basically, Akagi Group has thrown its full support behind Team Meta.

HEHE
Hello.
Are you alright? I haven't seen you at the apartment lately
Basically, there's two Japanese brothers going against each other in the upcoming race in Spain... One's a driver, and one's a manager!
But the impressive part is this Japanese driver at the top of the pack in the European F3000! His name's Gunma Akagi, of Hans Racing.
Well hello, Yuri. Haven't seen you in a while.
Sounds complicated
Could you hold on to this for me?
Oh yeah...
It's not like that, ma'am.
I've been dealing with some things.
You can't play around your whole life!
SWOOSH
Wait, Yuri!
And if I happen to die, take it straight to the police!
What!?
SCRATCH SCRATCH
That girl and her obsession with mysteries.
Something very important. Please take it without asking questions.
What is it?
Well, I suppose...

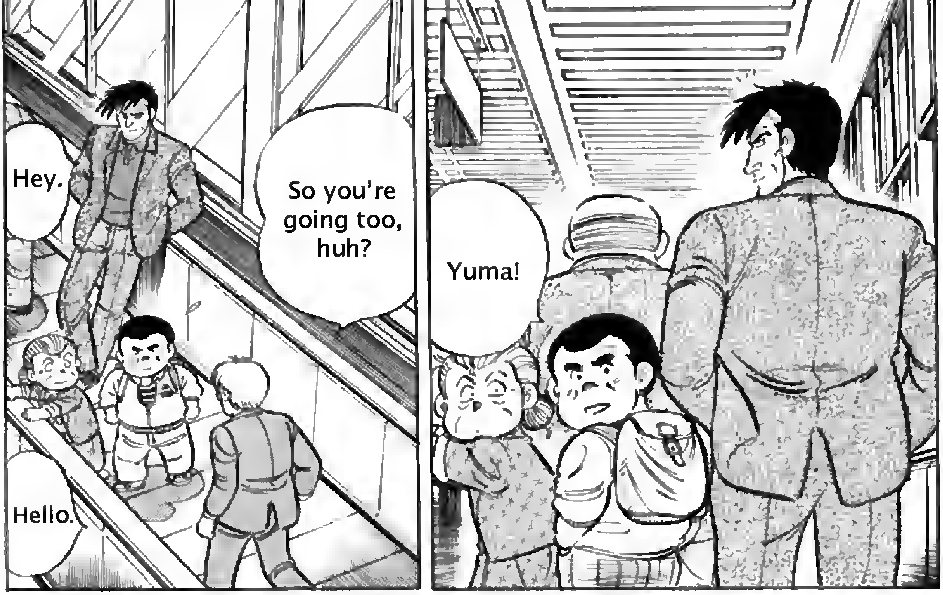
NEW TOKYO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
New Tokyo
International Airport

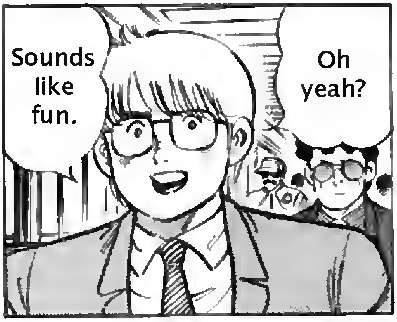

YAK
YAK
YAK
We need to get going now.

...!?
Hmph!


How about facing the cameras and signing off with a cool peace sign?
Come on, Otoya.

...
I mean ...
...is he faster now?
So Yuma...
...how's Gunma doing over there?
Worried about him?
Just curious.
...
Hey!
...
He's won two in a row in the European F3000, so that should tell you something.
To be honest, he's probably way beyond us now.


Hey.
So you're going too, huh?
Hello.
Yuma!

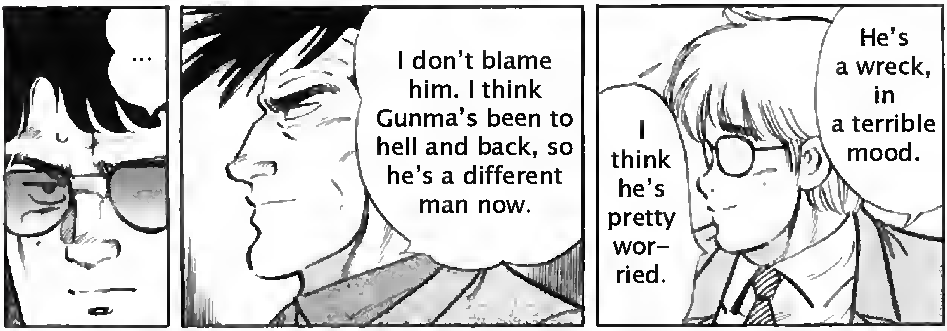

Sounds like fun.
Oh yeah?

We'll get in some sightseeing while we're there.
Heh heh... I've never been to Europe before!

I want to, but I'll leave him be this time around.
Are you gonna meet up with Gunma? I'll bet you have so much to talk about.

I just wanna see how much he's grown as a racer.
Just going as a spectator, to see how he does in F3000!
Well I'd like to give him a piece of my mind!

I heard he still hasn't lost to Gunma.
How's your driver doing?


...
I don't blame him. I think Gunma's been to hell and back, so he's a different man now.
I think he's pretty wor-ried.
He's a wreck, in a terrible mood.

BRITISH AIR
You and me both!
Can't wait to see what kinda man Gunma's become.

HUFF
ゼ"ェ
HUFF
HUFF
ゼ"ェ
ゼ"ェ
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
SMASH
Rrruh!
FWOOSH

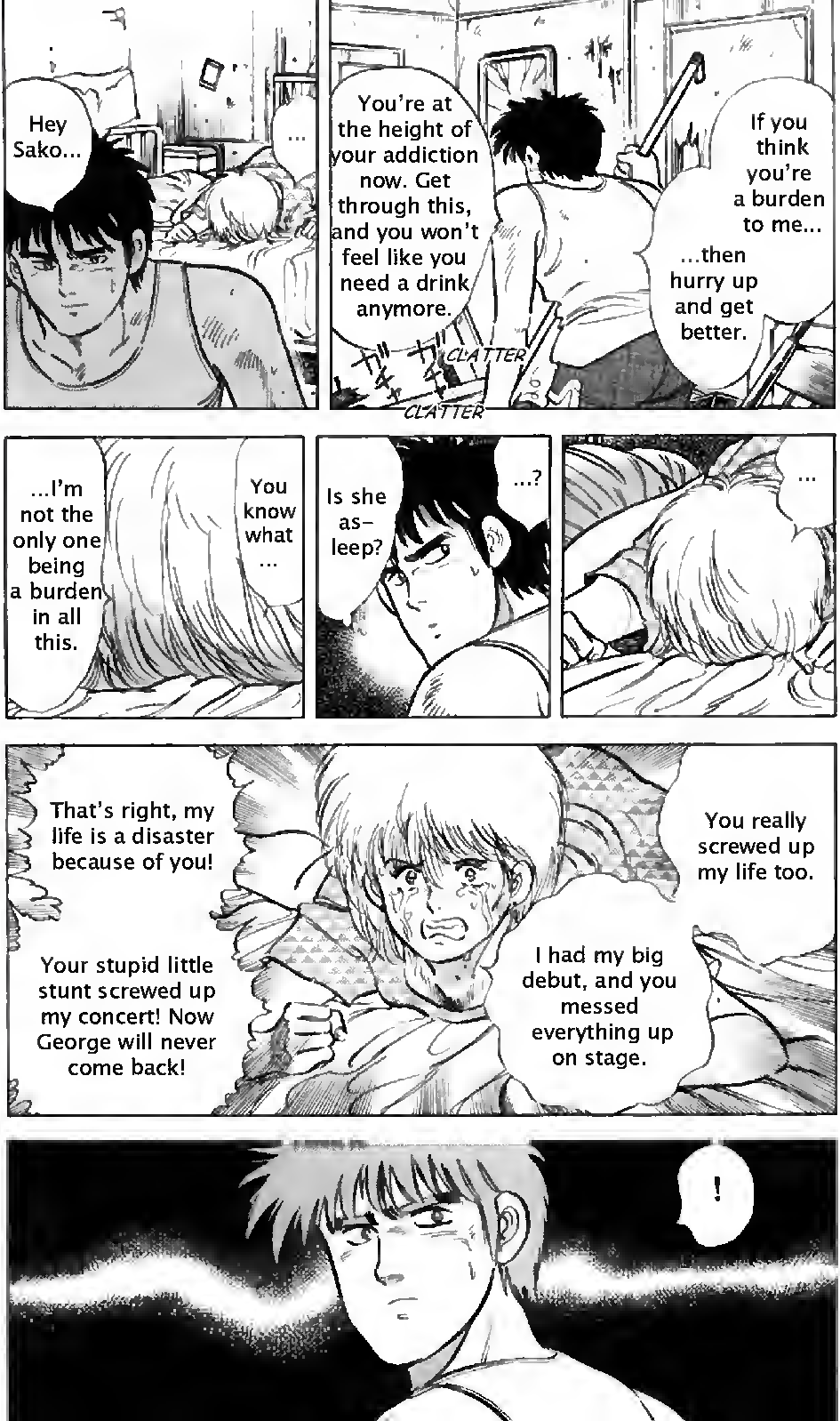
Let it all out.
You ass-hole ...
Fine, I'll go buy it then.
I told you we ain't got any booze in the house!
Gimme something to drink.
Then go buy some!
Sako ...
Not a chance!
Urrgh ...
You're a sick woman, and you gotta kick this habit no matter how much you suffer!
How many times are we gonna go over this!?

SMACK
You better chill out!
Y...
You ...!
Ha! Serves you right!
...

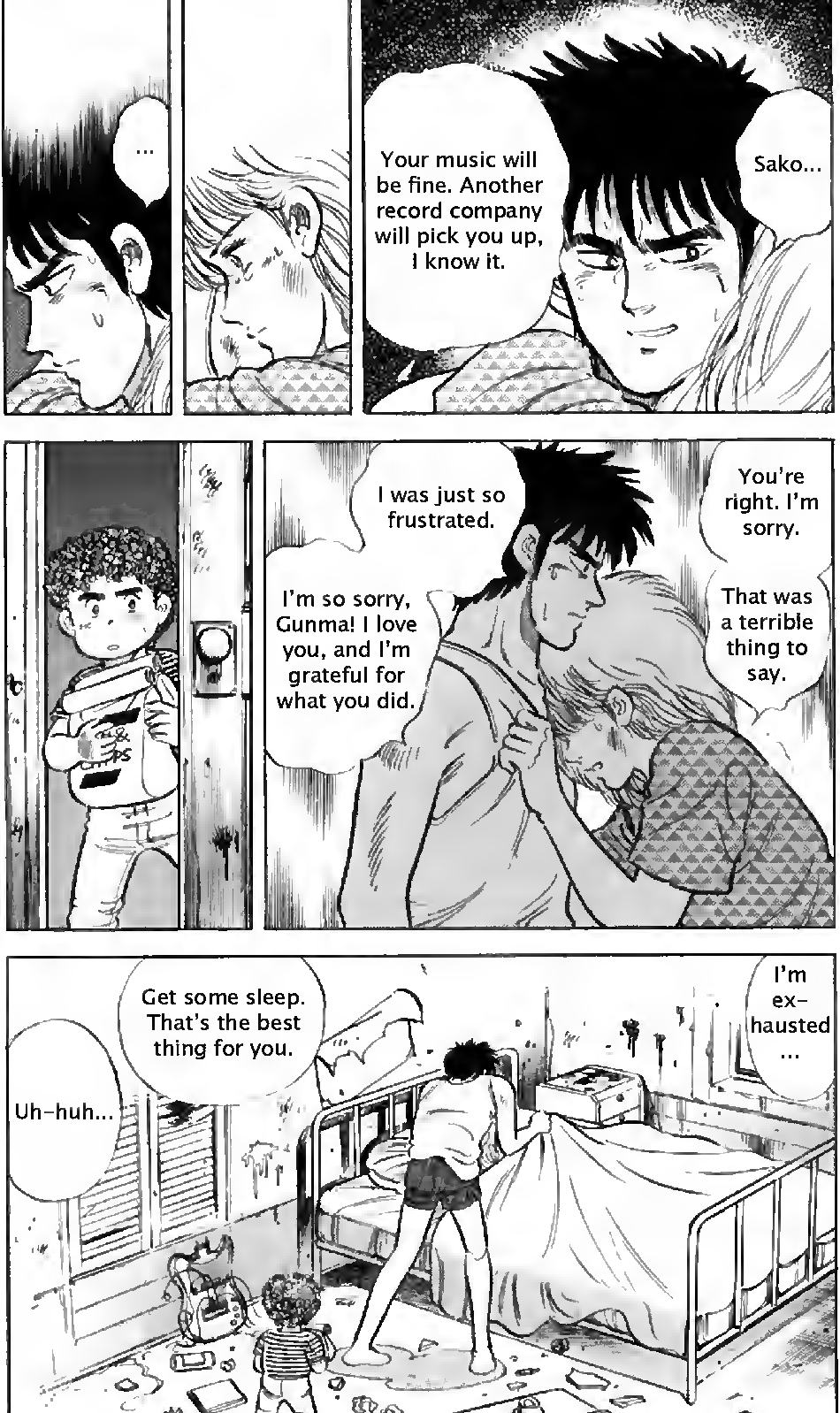
チャリ
TINK
You stupid jerk!
Mind your own business.
Just die and leave me alone!
I hate your guts, Gunma! I hate youuuu!

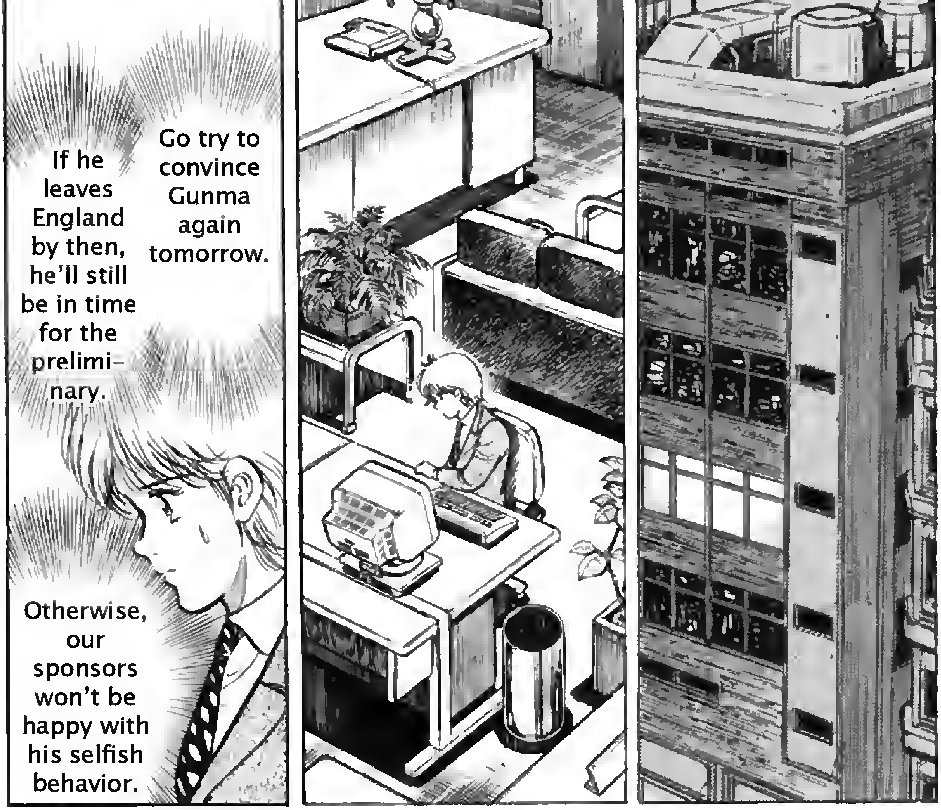
...but I love you.
Sorry to say this...
THUNK
ガラ
WHEW

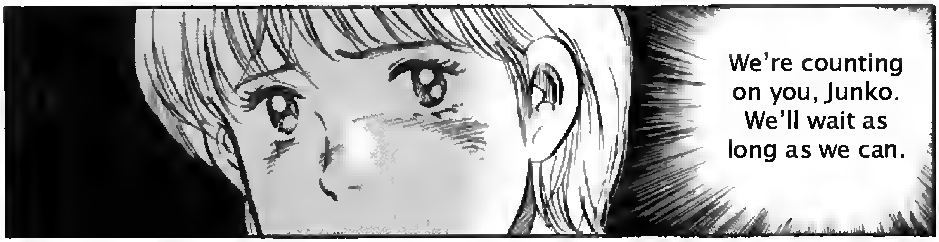
SHIVER
SHIVER SHIVER
SHIVER
SHIVER
カ"
ク
SHIVER
Don't touch me!
SWOOF
You cold?
...
I thought you needed to get to Spain right away.
Why don't you go to that race?
Are you really that stupid?
You wanna go but you don't.
I'm ruining your life because I'm a basket case. Just a burden to you.
Right, Gunma?
Is it because of me? Am I the one you're staying for!?
...


Hey Sako...
...
You're at the height of your addiction now. Get through this, and you won't feel like you need a drink anymore.
If you think you're a burden to me...
...then hurry up and get better.
CLATTER
CLATTER
...I'm not the only one being a burden in all this.
You know what ...
Is she as-leep?
...?
...
That's right, my life is a disaster because of you!
You really screwed up my life too.
Your stupid little stunt screwed up my concert! Now George will never come back!
I had my big debut, and you messed everything up on stage.
!

Sako...
You stamped out my dream!
You stupid hypocrite!
How could you do that!? You ruined my chance to be a singer!
I'm sure George is furious! He'll never come back!
I hate you so much!
Wuhuuu uh...
Huhu uuh ...
THUNK

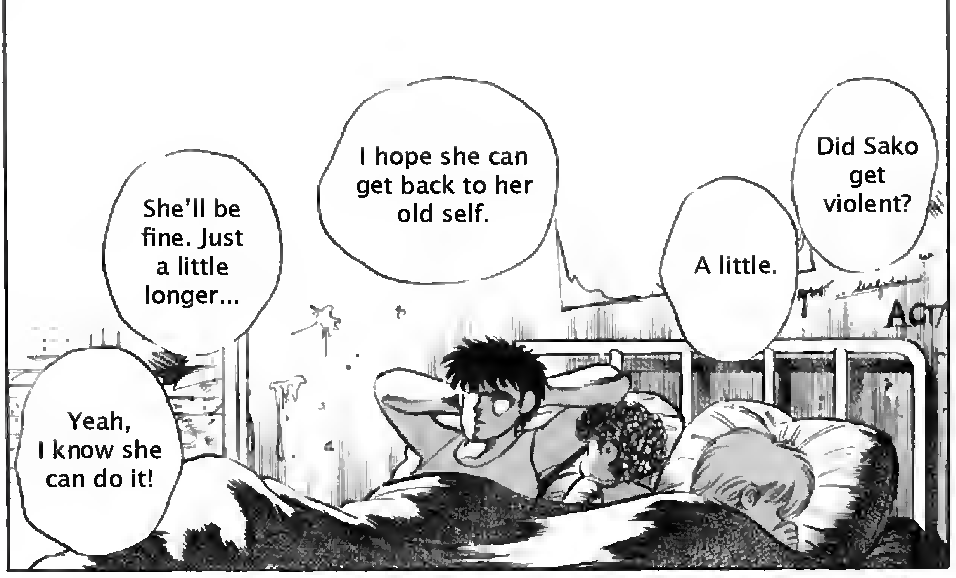

...
Your music will be fine. Another record company will pick you up, I know it.
Sako...
I was just so frustrated.
You're right. I'm sorry.
I'm so sorry, Gunma! I love you, and I'm grateful for what you did.
That was a terrible thing to say.
Get some sleep. That's the best thing for you.
I'm exhausted ...
Uh-huh...

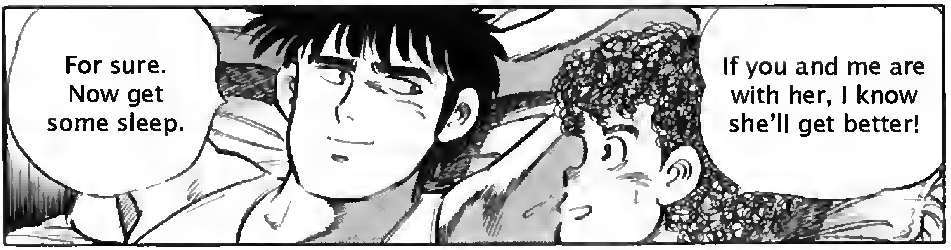

If he leaves England by then, he'll still be in time for the prelimi-nary.
Go try to convince Gunma again tomorrow.
Otherwise, our sponsors won't be happy with his selfish behavior.

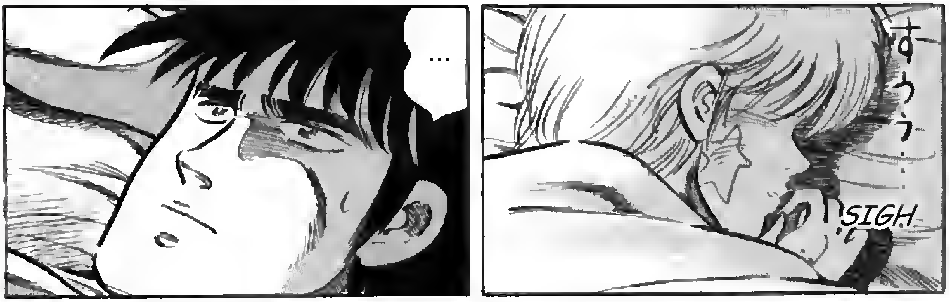

We're counting on you, Junko. We'll wait as long as we can.

VEEEEEEEH

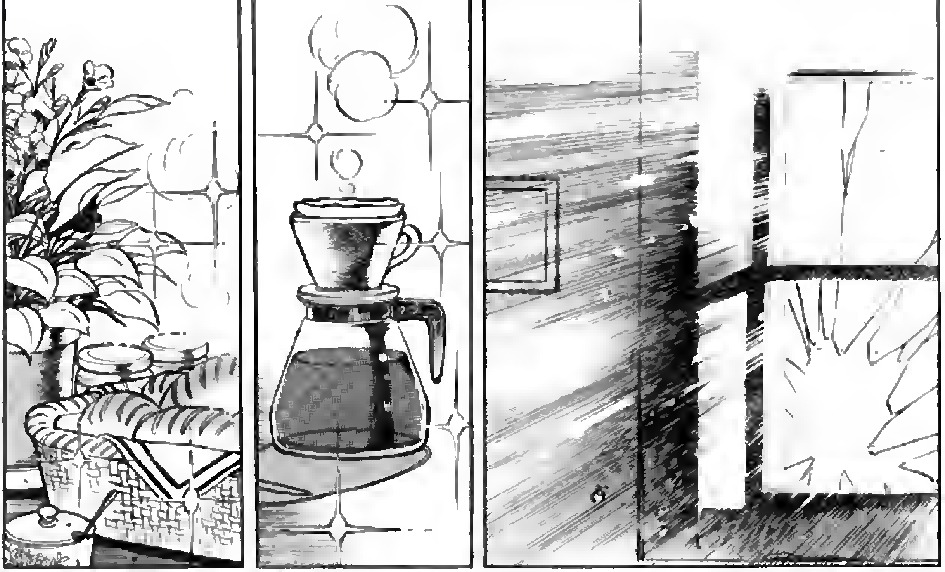
...

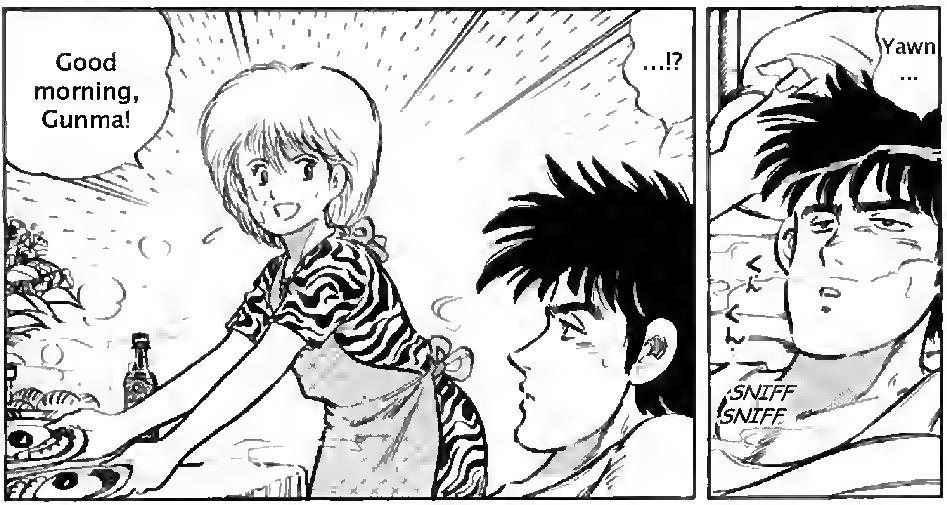

Did Sako get violent?
A little.
I hope she can get back to her old self.
She'll be fine. Just a little longer...
Yeah, I know she can do it!

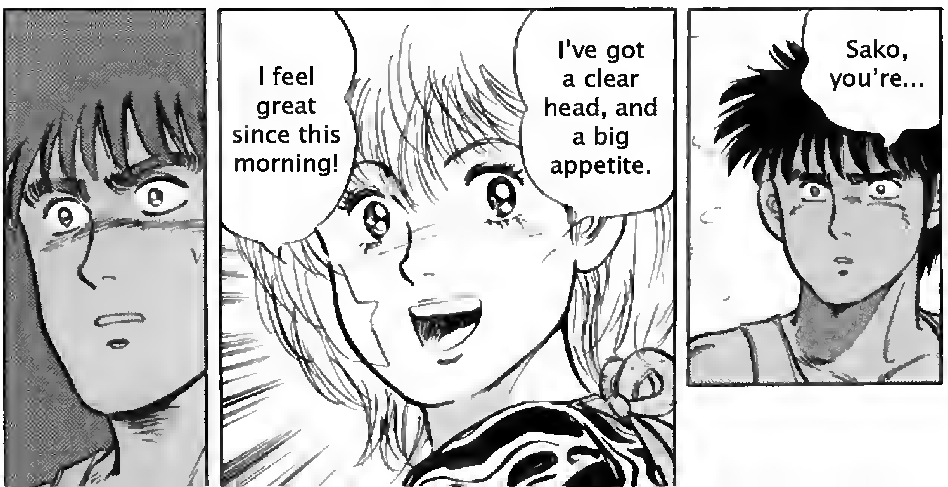

For sure. Now get some sleep.
If you and me are with her, I know she'll get better!


...
すうう…
SIGH

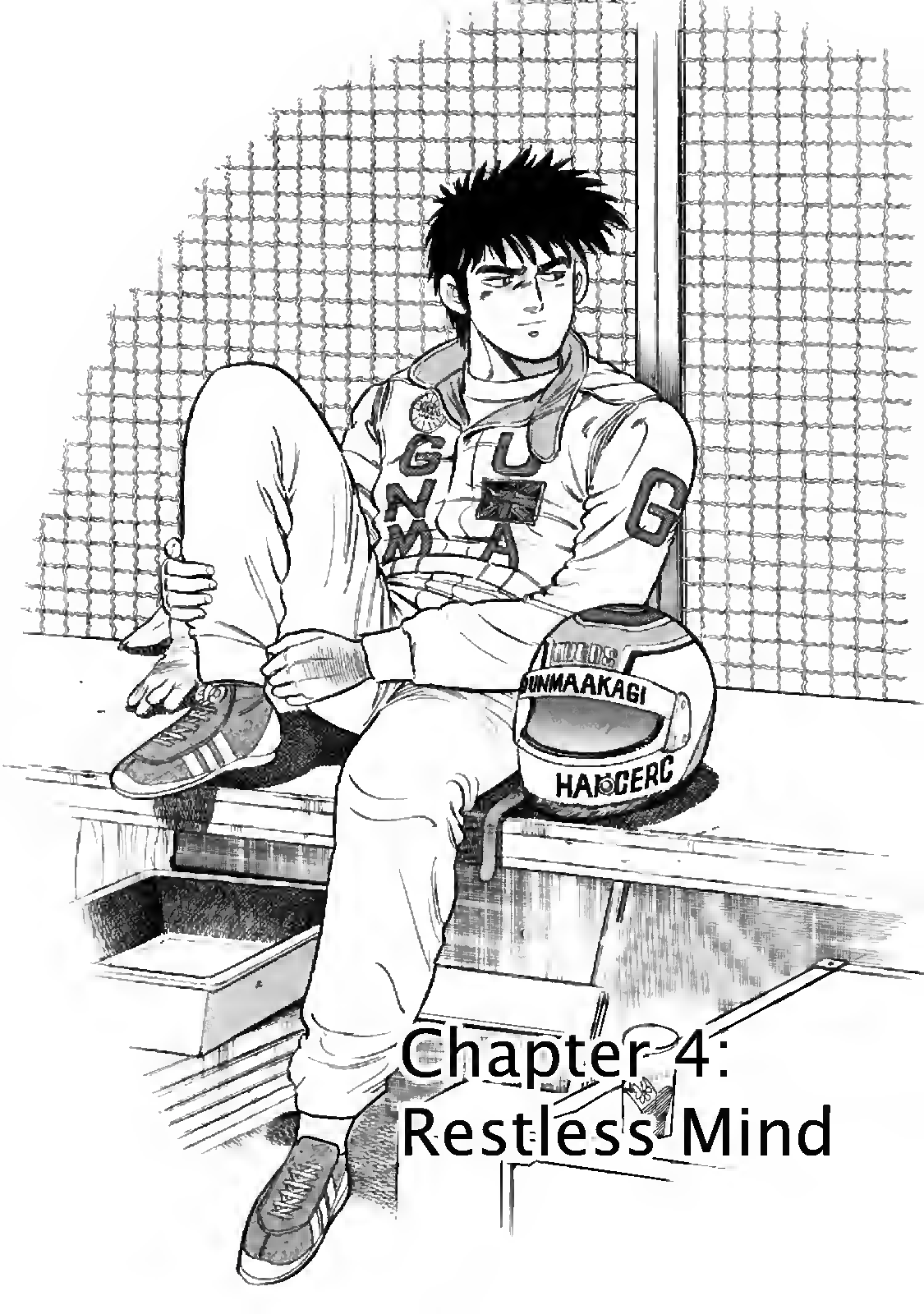
You stamped out my dream!
VEEEEEEEH



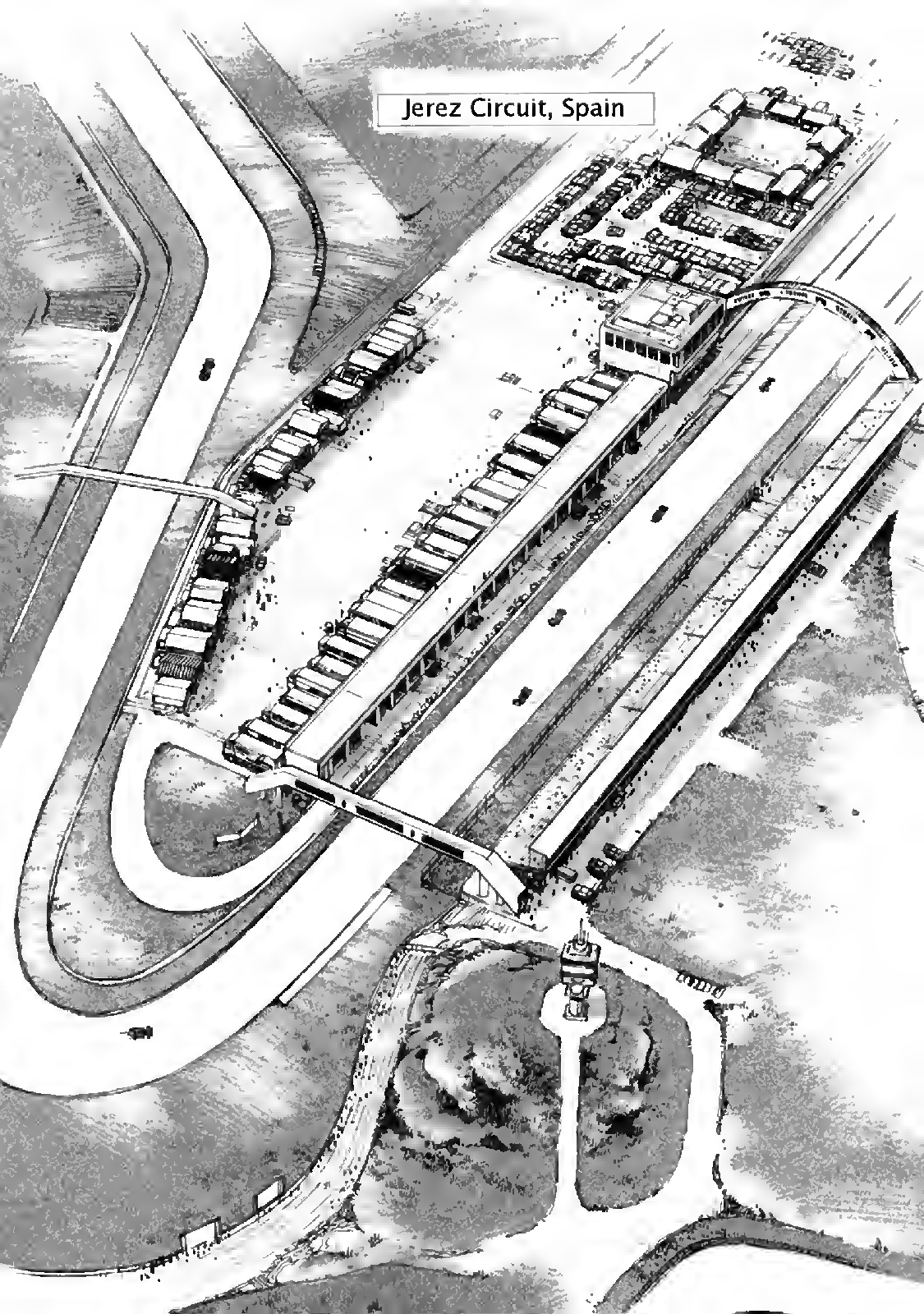

Good morning, Gunma!
...!?
Yawn ...
SNIFF SNIFF


I feel great since this morning!
I've got a clear head, and a big appetite.
Sako, you're...

KNOCK KNOCK
Yawn... Mumble mumble ...
YAY
I feel fine!
Thanks to you, Gunma!
All right!
Sorry to come so early.
Oh...
KACHUK
Co-ming.
You've got a race to catch!
Get going, Gunma!
Junko!

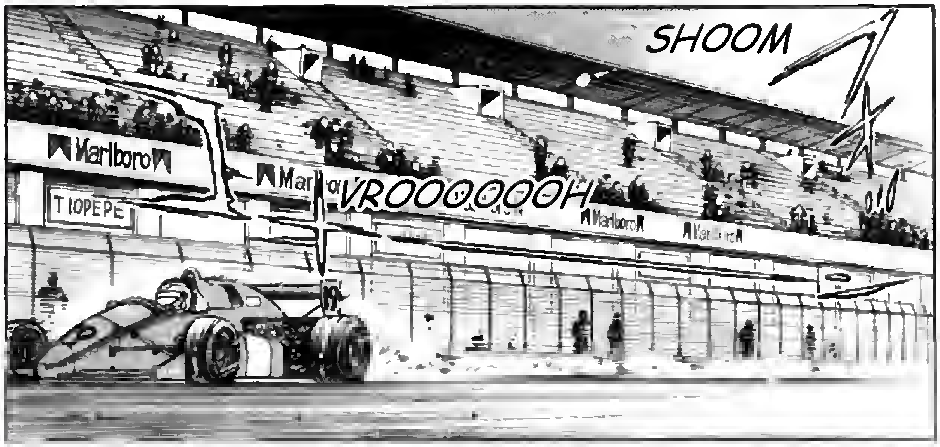


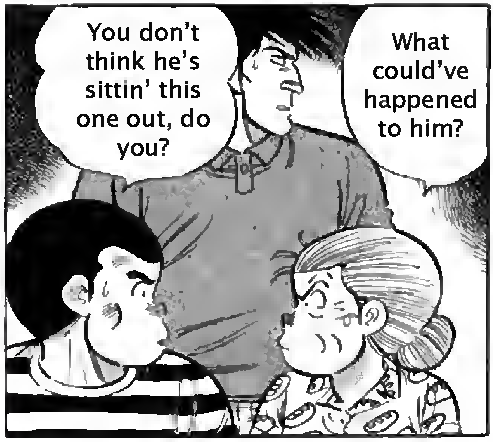
Chapter 4: Restless Mind

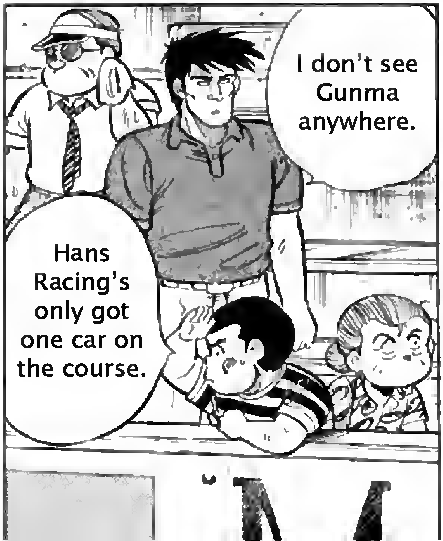

Jerez Circuit, Spain

VRRRR
VRRRRR

VROOM
VRRR
YAK
YAK

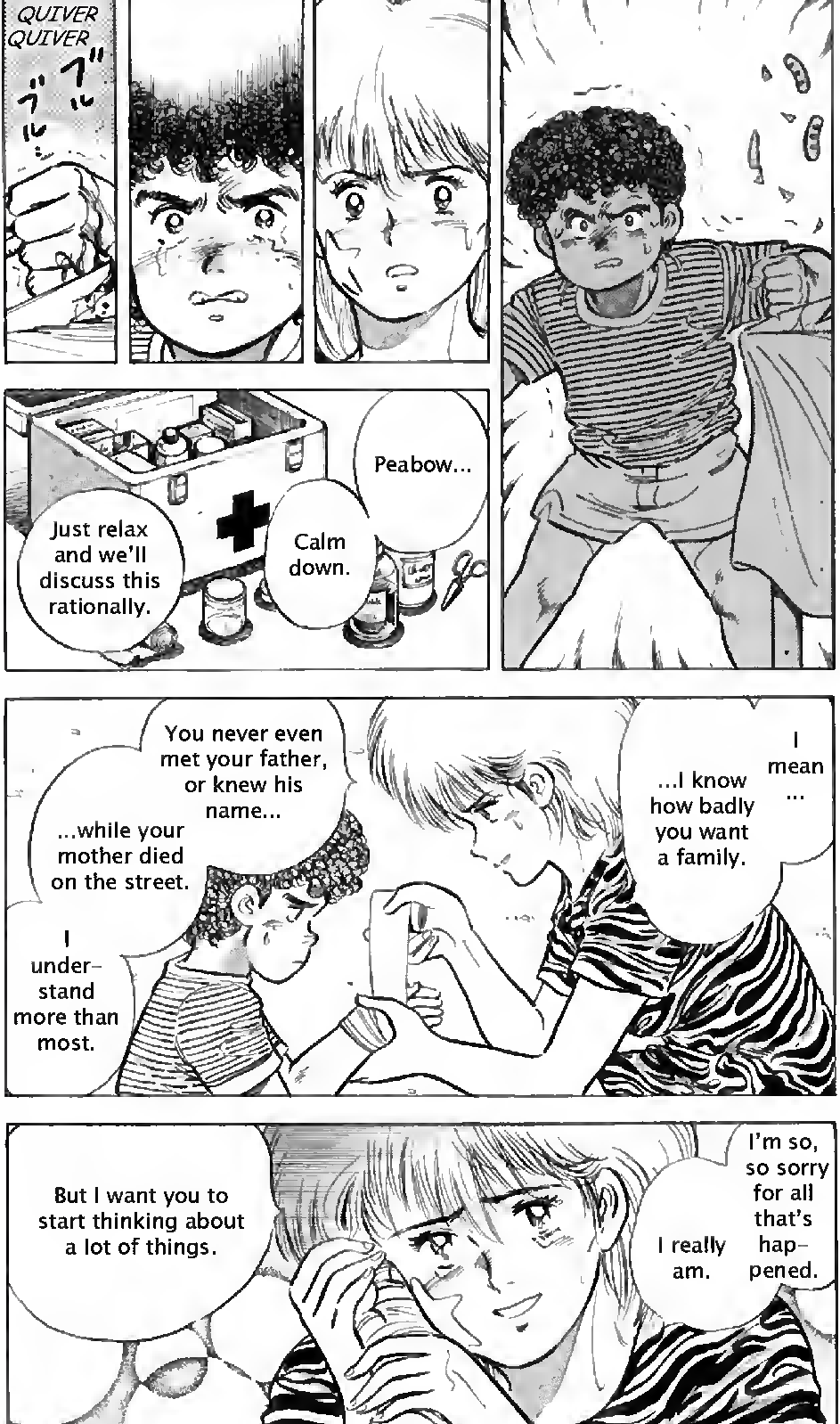

SHOOM
Marlboro
VROOOOOOH
Marlboro
TIOPEPE


You don't think he's sittin' this one out, do you?
What could've happened to him?

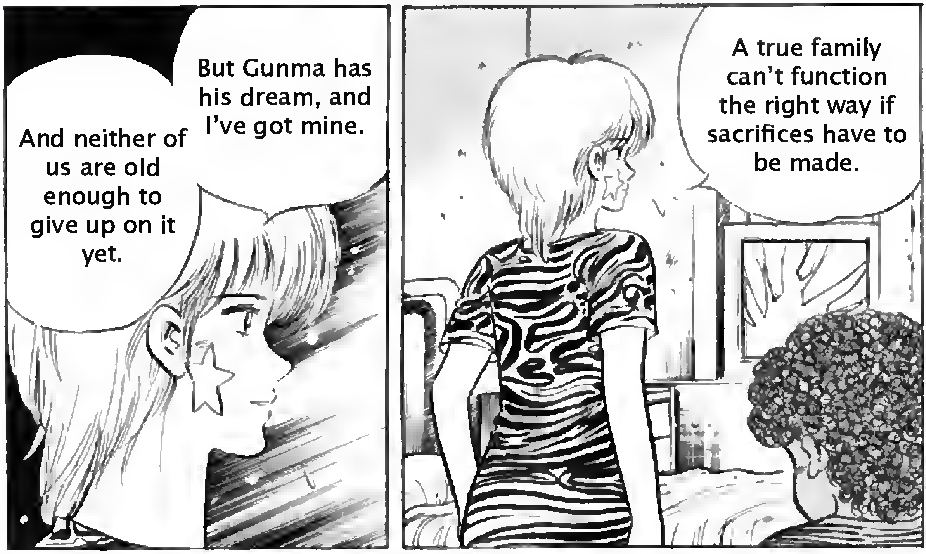

I don't see Gunma anywhere.
Hans Racing's only got one car on the course.

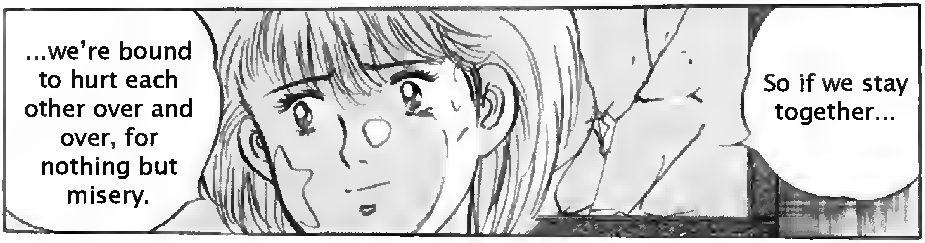
オオ...
GPa
OTOYA
VROOOOOOH
ADVAN
I don't see him anywhere.
I wonder what happened to Gunma...
VOHHH
It's as if he's pissing on our contract!
Whew... We finally got word.
Apparently he changed his mind and he's coming to race.
Marlboro
Marlb
ZOOOM
Right.
Anyway, he won't make it in time for the morning preliminary, so we'll have to hope for the best this afternoon.
HANCE

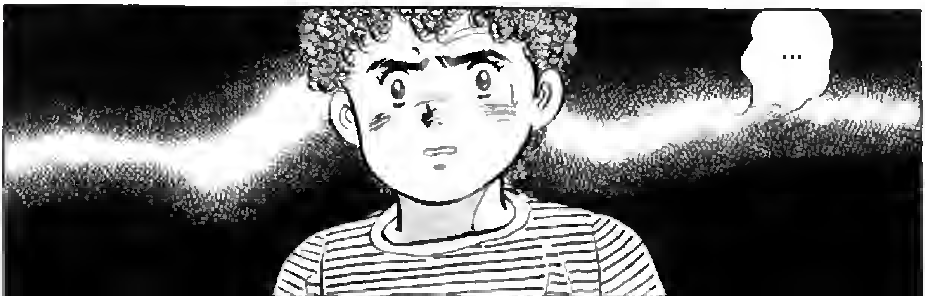
How could Gunma sneak off to race while I'm sleeping?
I don't get it, Sako!
Pea-bow!
He made a huge promise and broke it like it meant nothing!
He betrayed me!
I told him he should go.
A good night's rest did wonders for my health, and then Junko came by this morning...
I'm completely fine now.
It's not like that. I really urged him to go.
Don't be silly.
BANG
Then she's behind all this!
!!

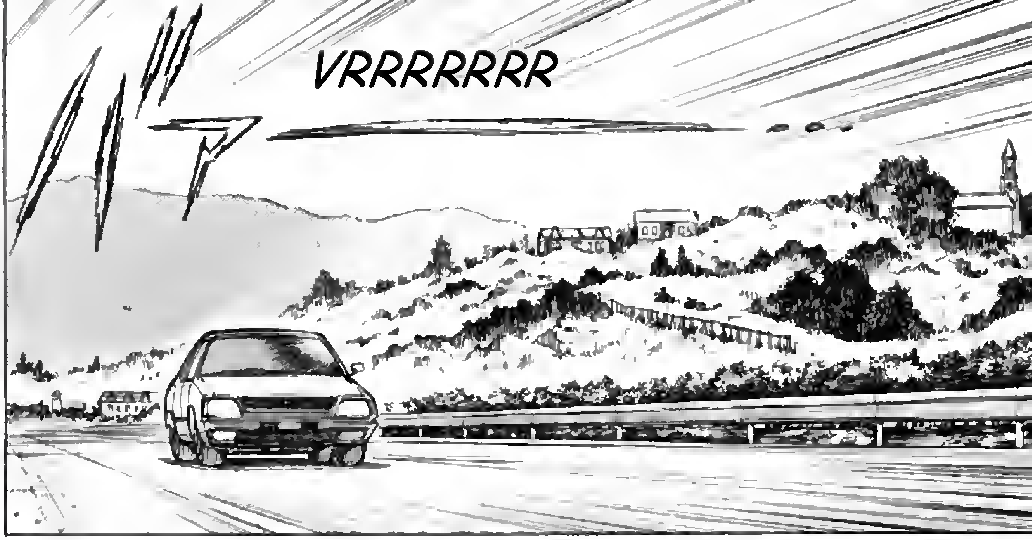

QUIVER
QUIVER
Peabow...
Calm down.
Just relax and we'll discuss this rationally.
I mean ...
...I know how badly you want a family.
You never even met your father, or knew his name...
...while your mother died on the street.
I under-stand more than most.
I'm so, so sorry for all that's hap-pened.
I really am.
But I want you to start thinking about a lot of things.

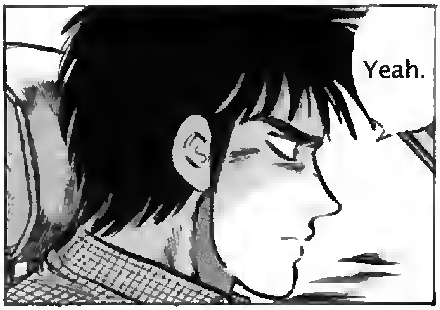
Okay, Peabow?
Here's what I think.
...I want you to think about what a family really is.
Instead of some blind desire for a family...

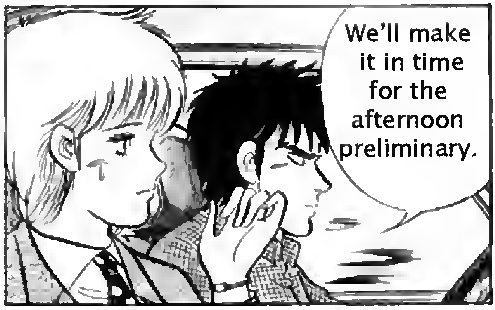

But Gunma has his dream, and I've got mine.
And neither of us are old enough to give up on it yet.
A true family can't function the right way if sacrifices have to be made.

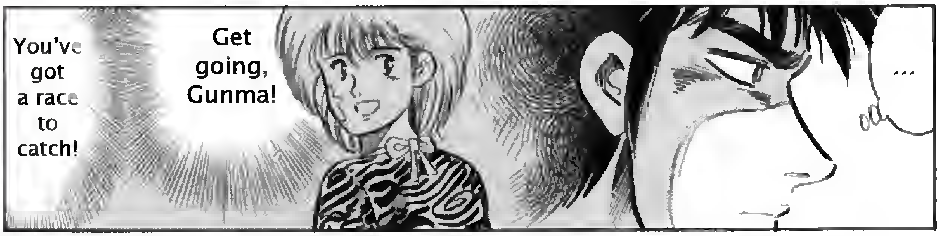

...we're bound to hurt each other over and over, for nothing but misery.
So if we stay together...


...


VRRRRRRR


Yeah.


We'll make it in time for the afternoon preliminary.


You've got a race to catch!
Get going, Gunma!
...

And get going! You don't have much time!
Better not wake Peabow. He'd probably have a fit, so leave him to me.
I'm completely fine now.

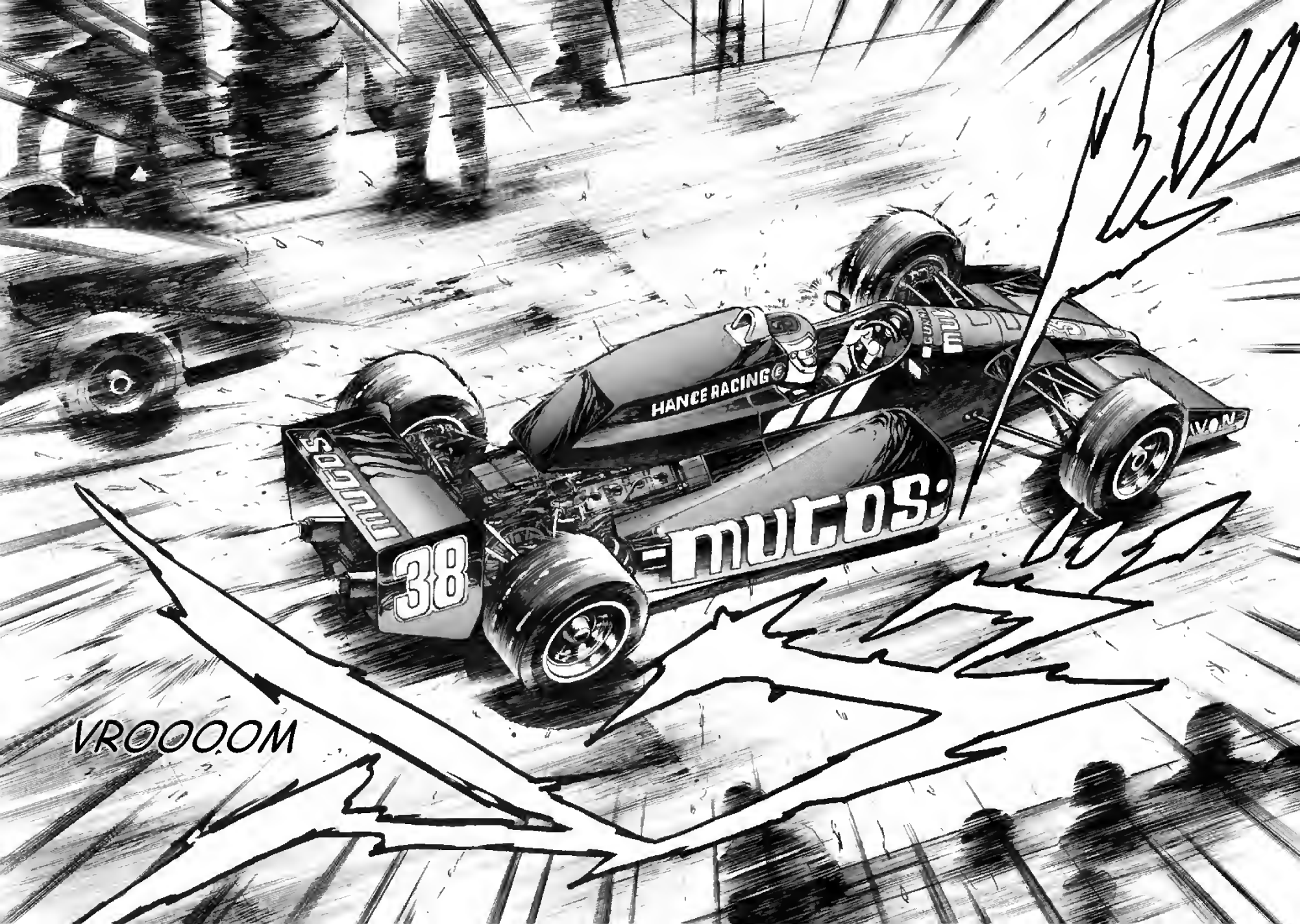
Hm?
Best of luck...
Best of luck, Gunma!
KRR
SHUK
Best of luck?
Sako!
That ain't her way of saying goodbye forever, is it?
VROOOOH

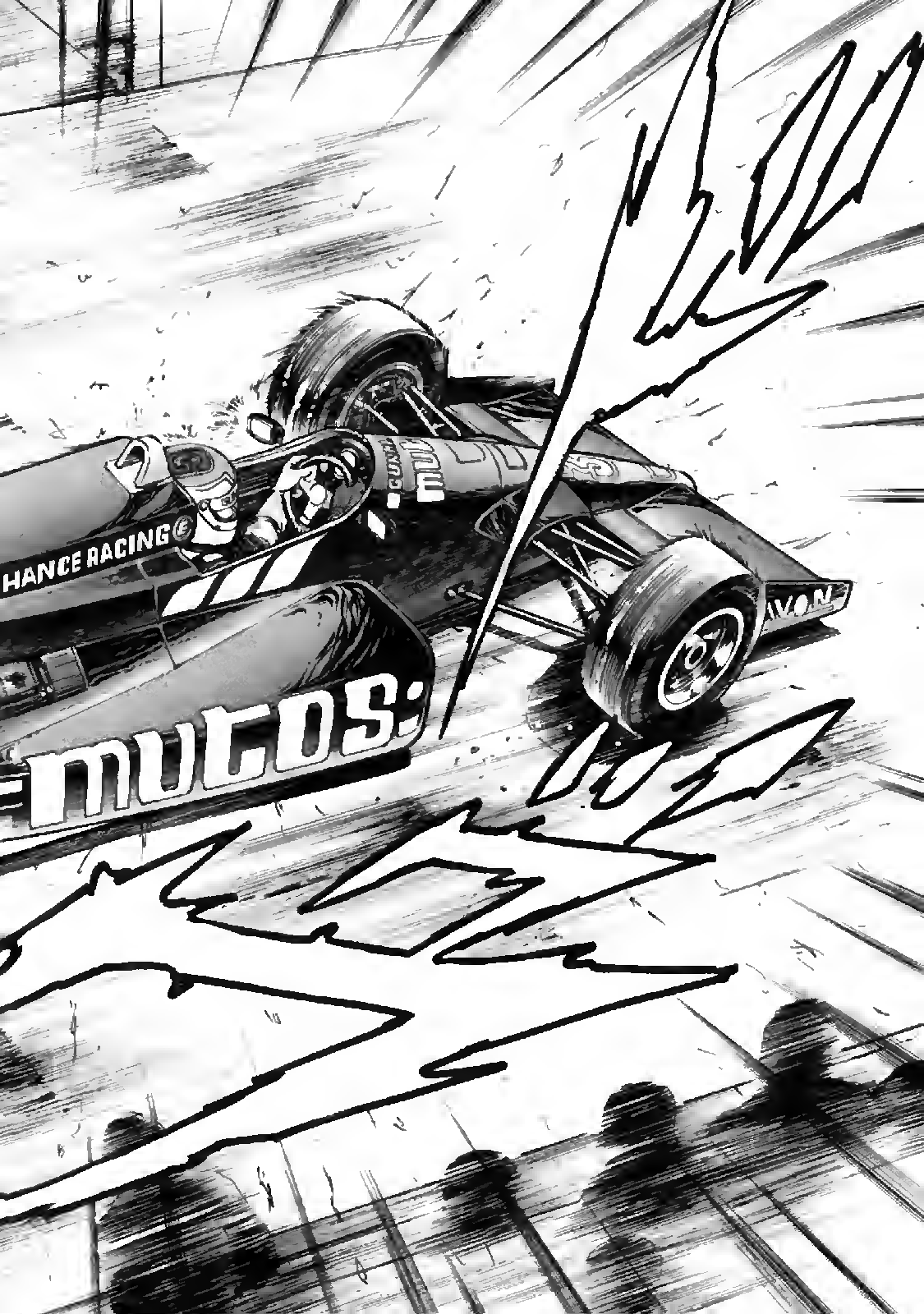
Just you and me.
Come with me, Peabow.
So what'll happen to you and me?
I dunno...
Please come with me!
You'll give me courage.
I'll never depend on alcohol again, and I can live a good life.
If I was old enough...
No, that'll never happen.
...I'd marry you and make you the happiest girl on the planet.
You'll be a man soon. You'll find a girlfriend, and I'd probably be a hassle.
Don't be ridiculous! I'm the one who'd get in the way.
Right?
I'd probably get in your way more than anything.

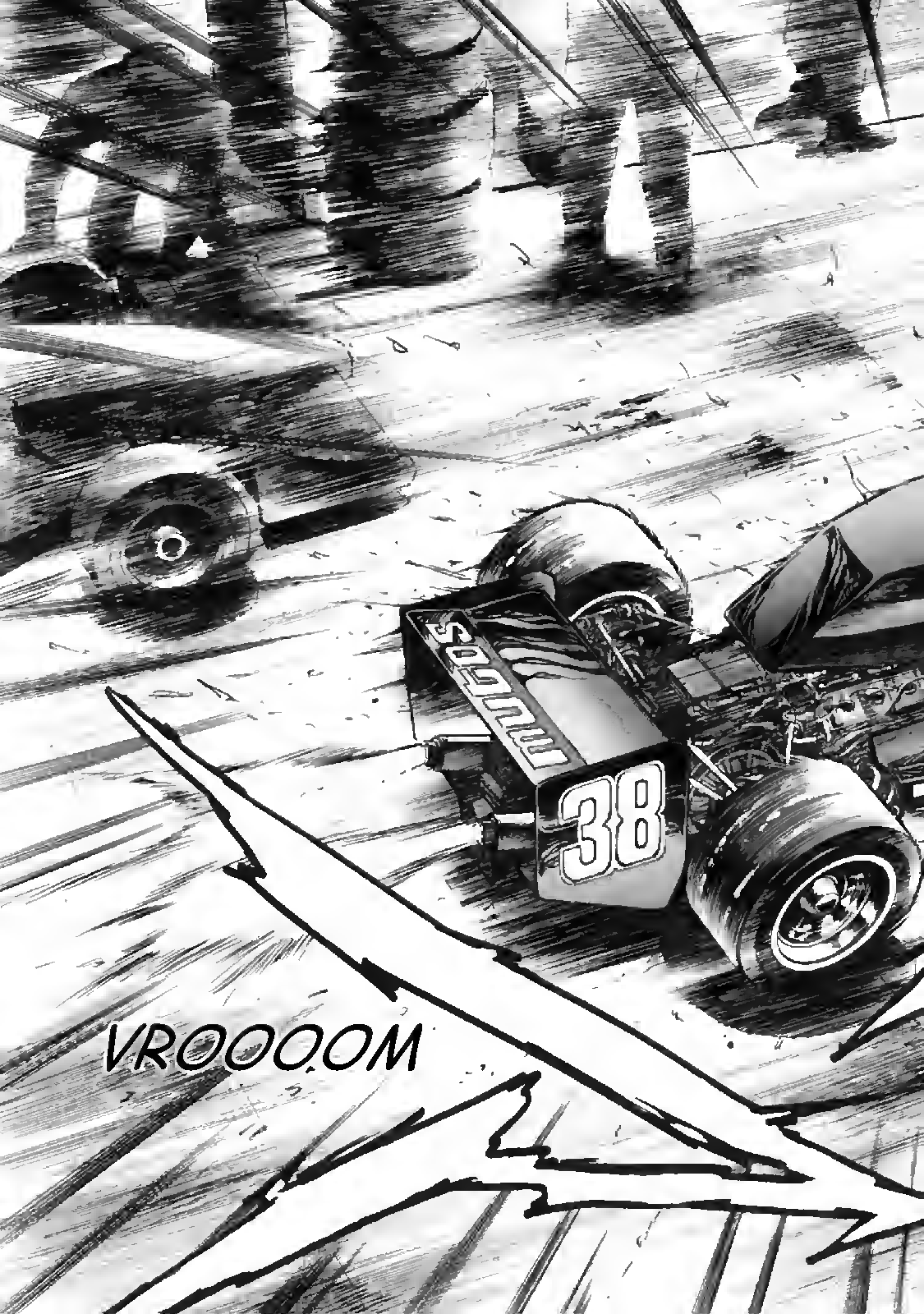
KATUNK
I don't care, Sako. Please marry me!
...I'll be nearly 40 years old.
By the time you're 20...
!?
I just called him.
...
George will be here soon.
THUNK
Marry me, Sako!
Be my wife!
And for ourselves...
For Gunma...
Let's get out of here together.

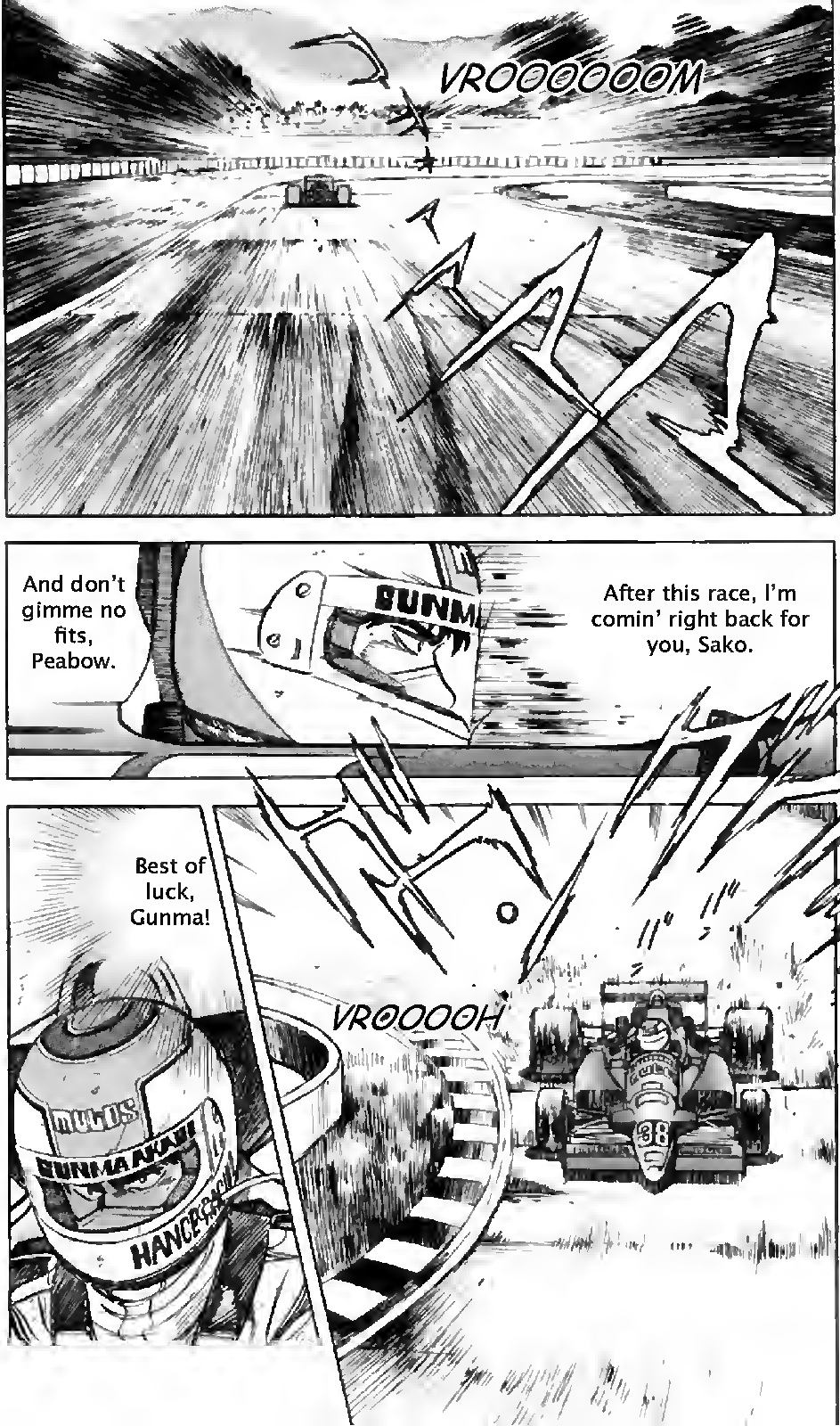
G... Gunma!
It's about time he showed up!
Look at him, a big international racer now.
It's Gunma!
SHIK
You'll need to score about here to qualify. And here's the best time so far.
GUNMA
I don't need to look at that.
NMA AKAGI
HANCE
VAROOM

METAMORPHOSE
Gunma
...
VROOOOOH
38
VROOOH
VROO


HANCE RACING
mucos
38
mucos
VROOOOM


HANCE RACING
AVON
MUCDS:

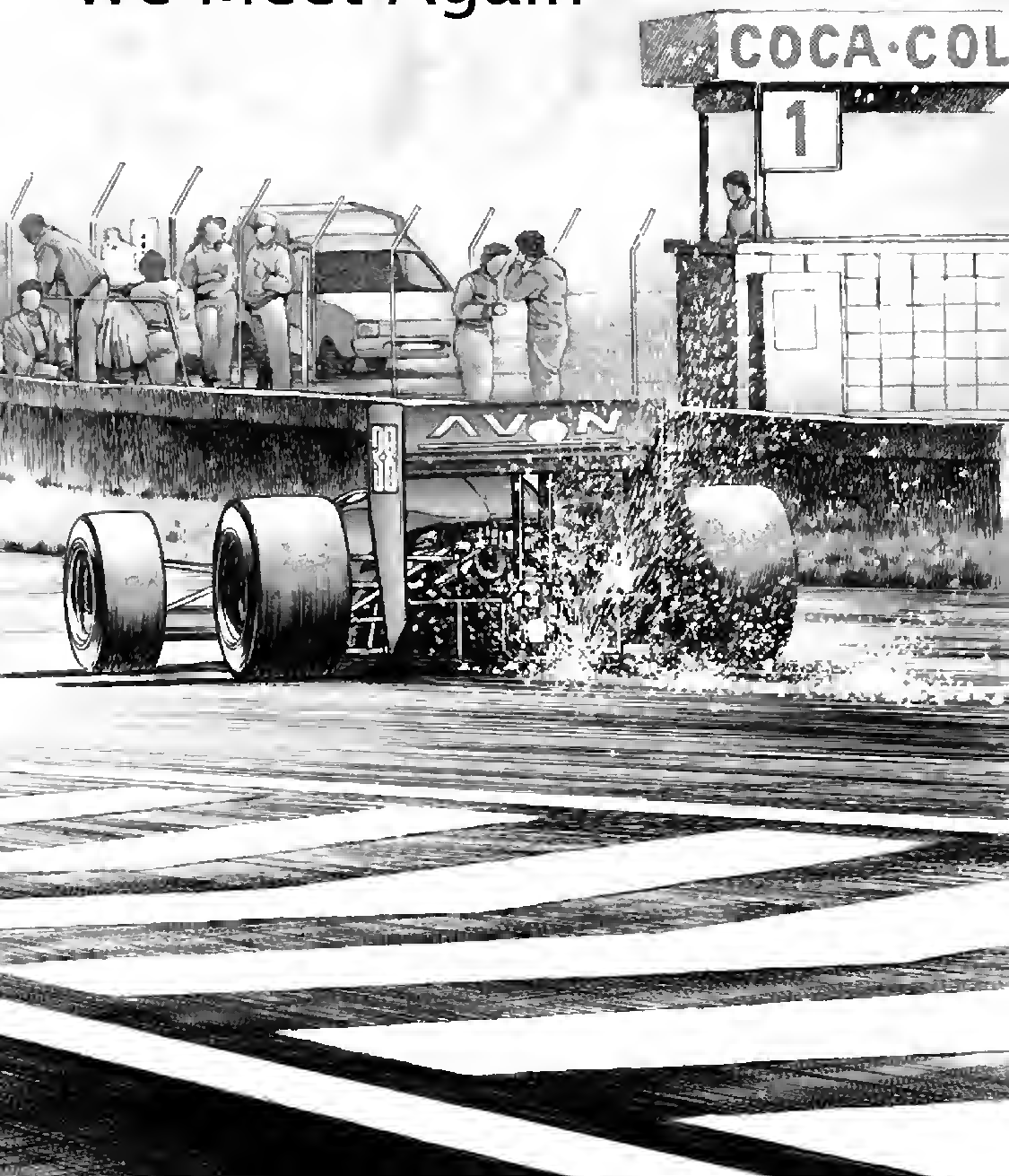

38
VROOOOM

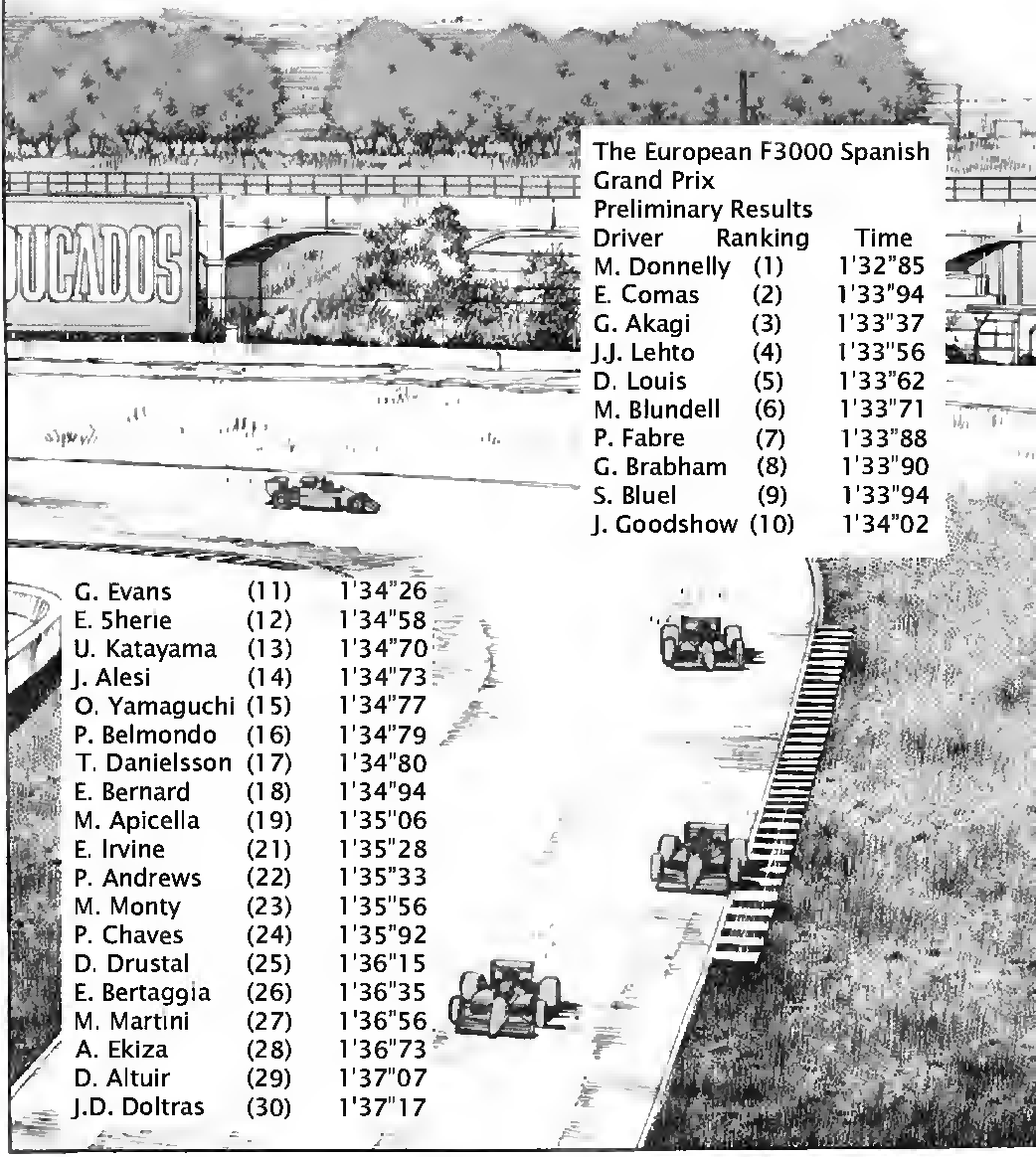

VROOOOOOM
And don't gimme no fits, Peabow.
After this race, I'm comin' right back for you, Sako.
Best of luck, Gunma!
VROOOOH
38

You stamped out my dream!
You really screwed up my life too.
...
GUNMA AKAGI
Best of luck, Gunma!
...luck!
Best of...
PEPSI
Coca-Cola
VROOOM

Best
of luck!

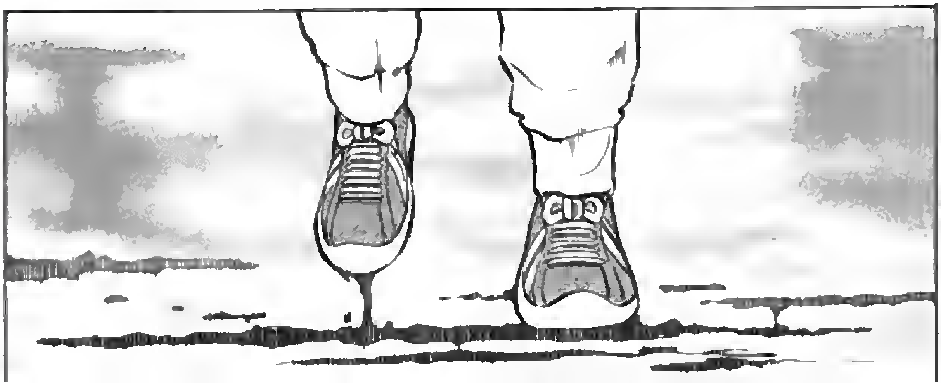
Chapter 5:
We Meet Again

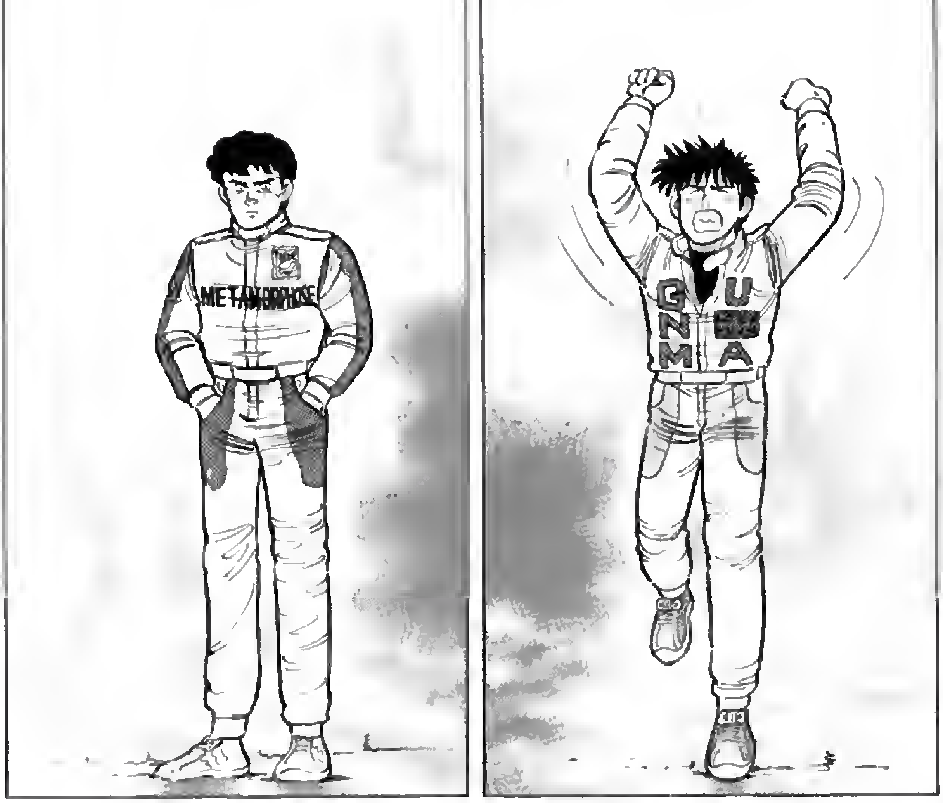




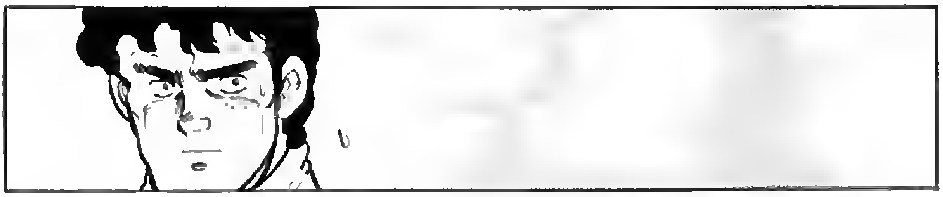
The European F3000 Spanish Grand Prix
Preliminary Results

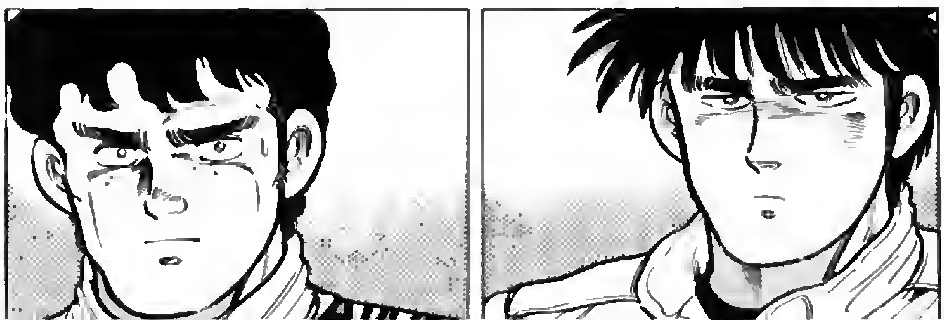
Driver	Ranking	Time
M. Donnelly	(1)	1'32"85
E. Comas	(2)	1'33"94
G. Akagi	(3)	1'33"37
J.J. Lehto	(4)	1'33"56
D. Louis	(5)	1'33"62
M. Blundell	(6)	1'33"71
P. Fabre	(7)	1'33"88
G. Brabham	(8)	1'33"90
S. Bluel	(9)	1'33"94
J. Goodshow	(10)	1'34"02
G. Evans	(11)	1'34"26
E. Sherie	(12)	1'34"58
U. Katayama	(13)	1'34"70
J. Alesi	(14)	1'34"73
O. Yamaguchi	(15)	1'34"77
P. Belmondo	(16)	1'34"79
T. Danielsson	(17)	1'34"80
E. Bernard	(18)	1'34"94
M. Apicella	(19)	1'35"06
E. Irvine	(21)	1'35"28
P. Andrews	(22)	1'35"33
M. Monty	(23)	1'35"56
P. Chaves	(24)	1'35"92
D. Drustal	(25)	1'36"15
E. Bertaggia	(26)	1'36"35
M. Martini	(27)	1'36"56
A. Ekiza	(28)	1'36"73
D. Altuir	(29)	1'37"07
J.D. Doltras	(30)	1'37"17



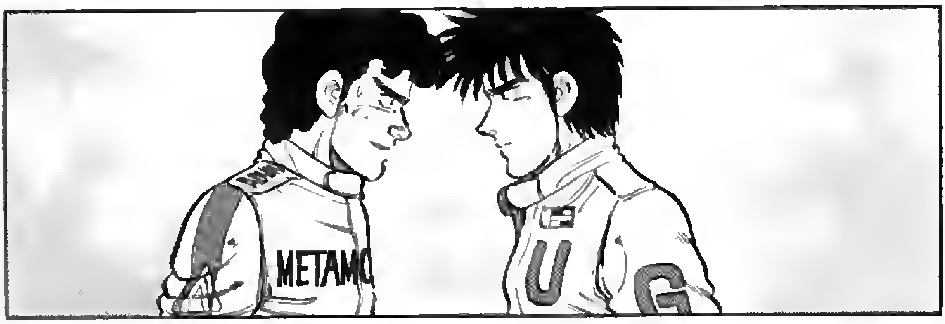

GUNMA

YAWN
はふ…

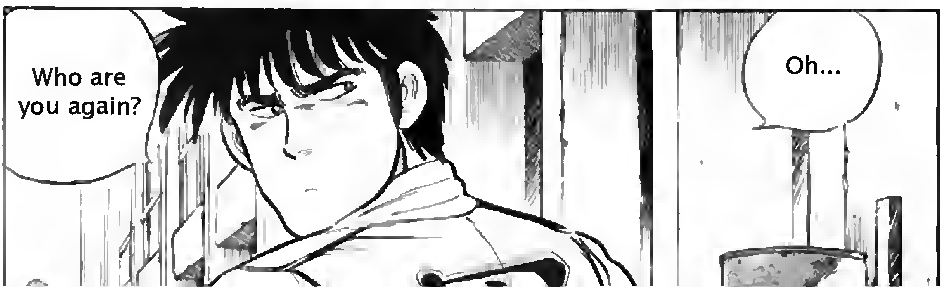




It's been awhile, Gunma.
METAMORPHOSE


METAMO

ADVAN
You ignoring me now?
Hey, hold on!

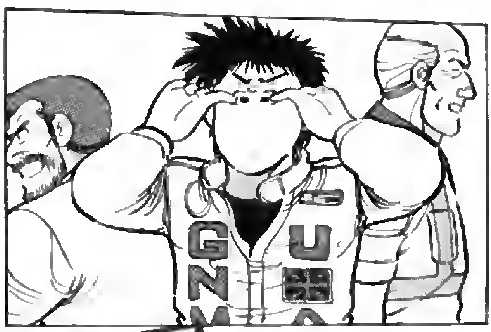

Who are you again?
Oh...

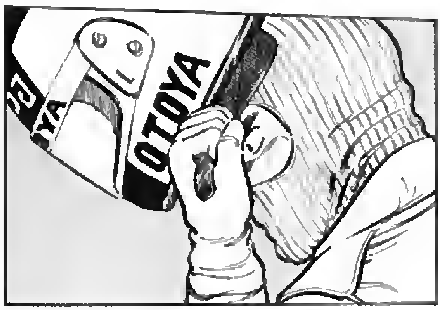
Oh, right. Long time no see.
Sorry about that. I was thinkin' about this girl...
The name's Otoya Yamaguchi! And you ain't never beat me!
Don't get too full of yourself just 'cause you raced in Europe a few times!
And now that I'm here in Europe, your luck's about to run out!
Remember this, Gunma!
The Goddess of Victory is still on my side!
Gunma.
Get over it already.
MUMBLE
MUMBLE
Still talkin' about that stuff?

You're looking good.
Hey Yuma!
Yeah?
A little advice...
So you finally got to Europe.
Thanks to the money.
You'll never beat me with Otoya.
!

You're pretty confi-dent.
See ya!
Gunma ...
Hold on.
Tamotsu and the guys are here!
They've been watching you since the preliminary yesterday.
...
Yeah.
Junko told me.
WOOOOHOOOO

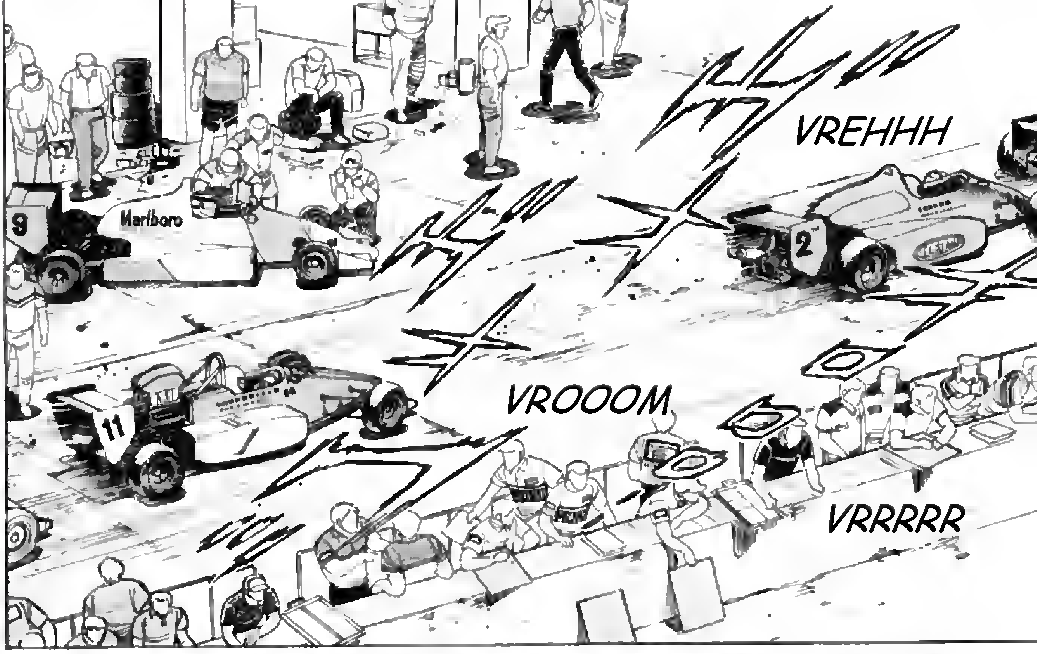
YEAHHHHHH
Marlboro
Marlboro

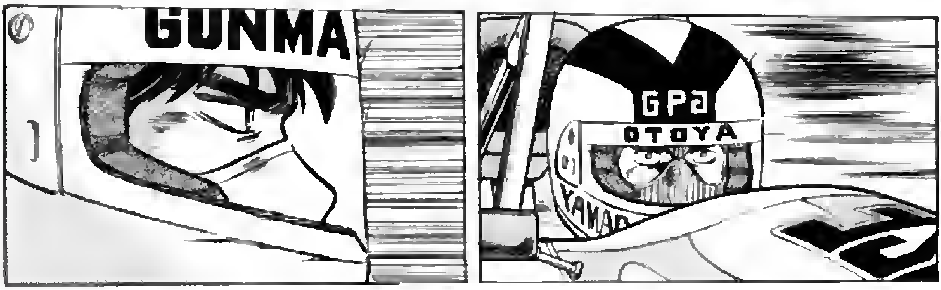

G
U

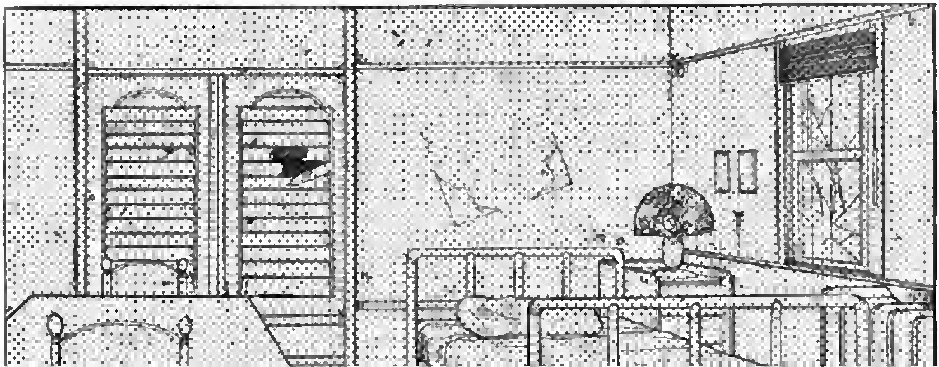

OTOYA

YEAHHHHHH

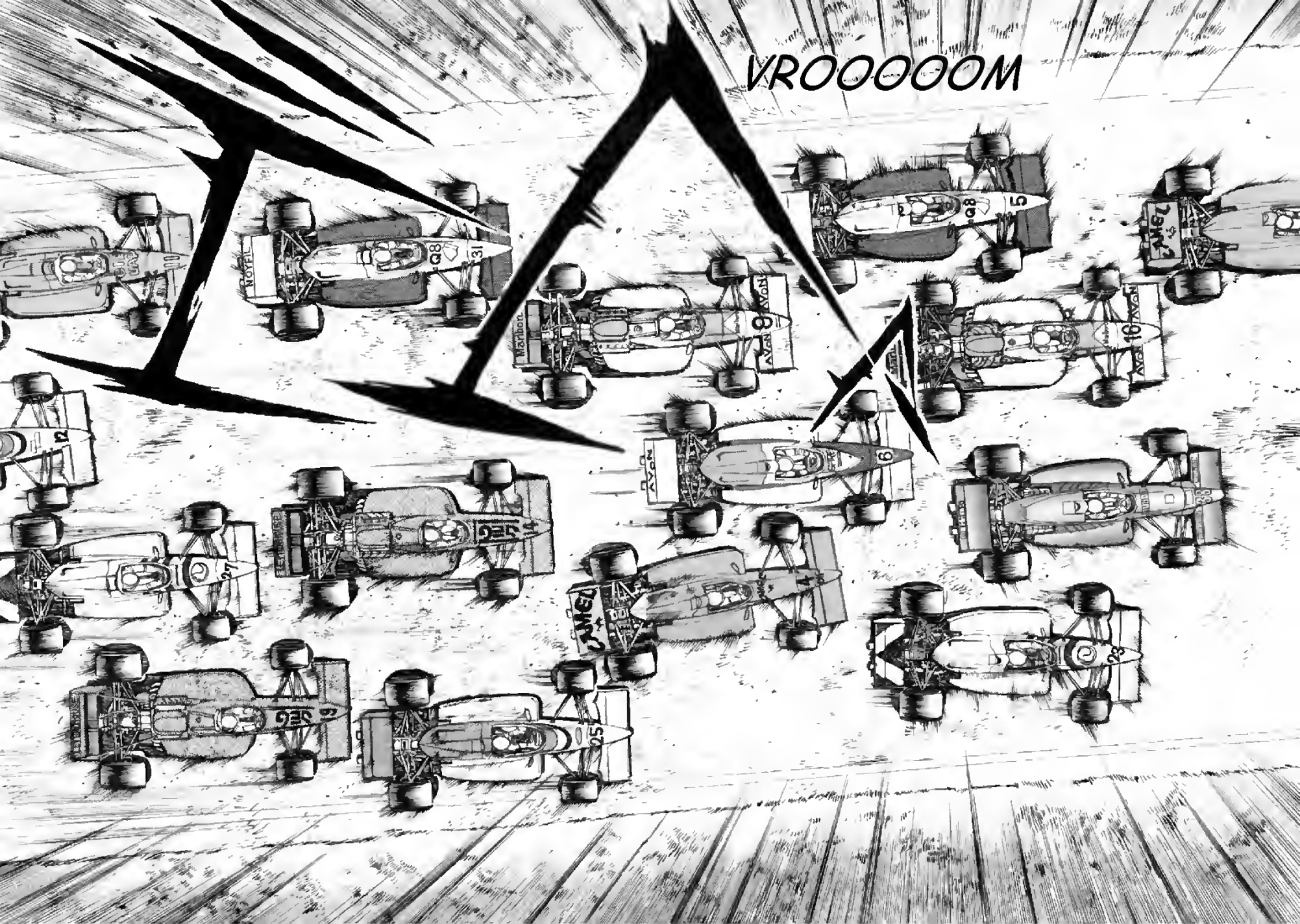
VROOM VROOM
GUNMA AK

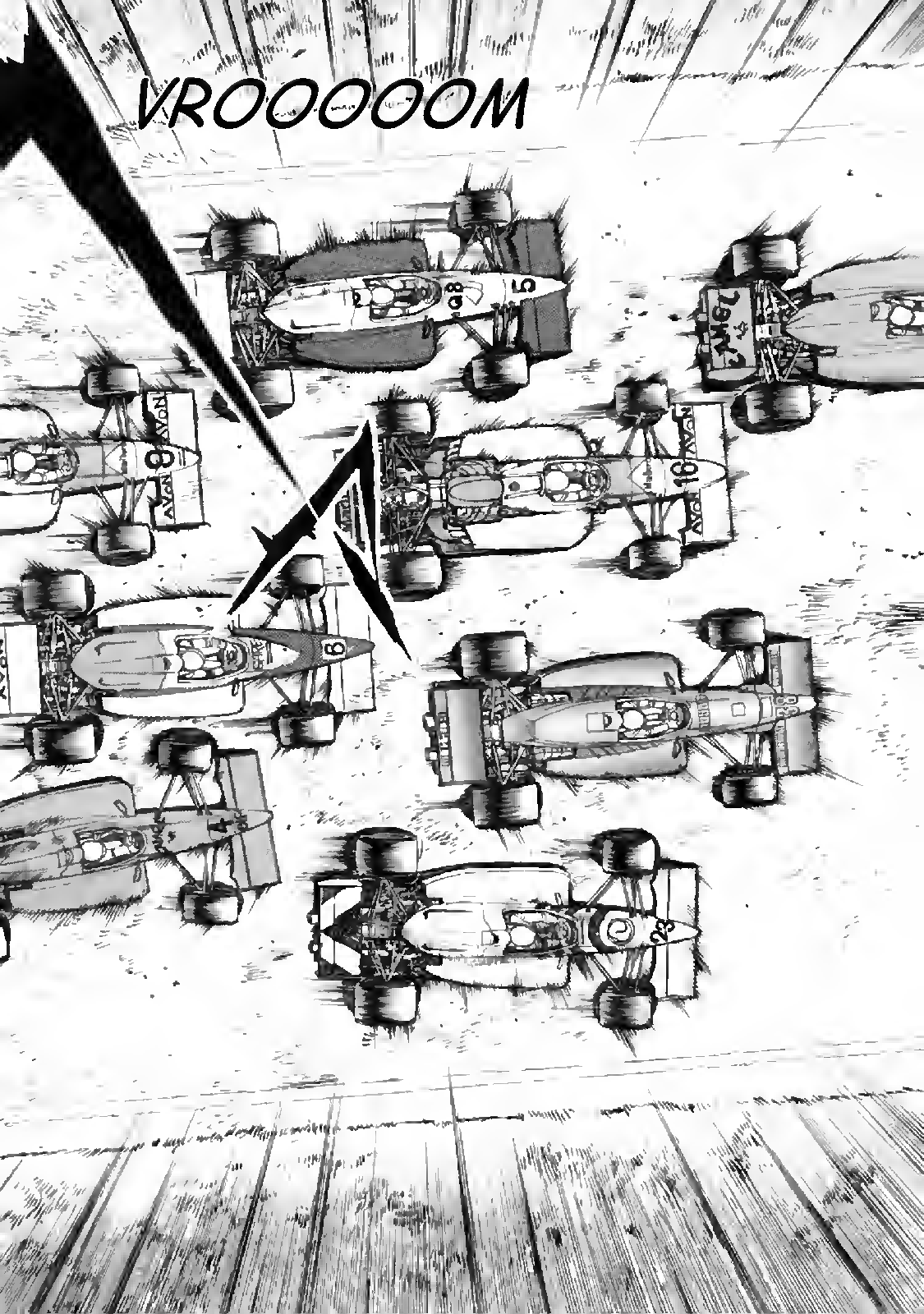

VREHHH
9
Marlboro
2
VROOOM
11
VRRRRR


GUNMA
GPa
OTOYA



ORPHOSE
AVON
Marlboro
AVON
AVON
MUDOS

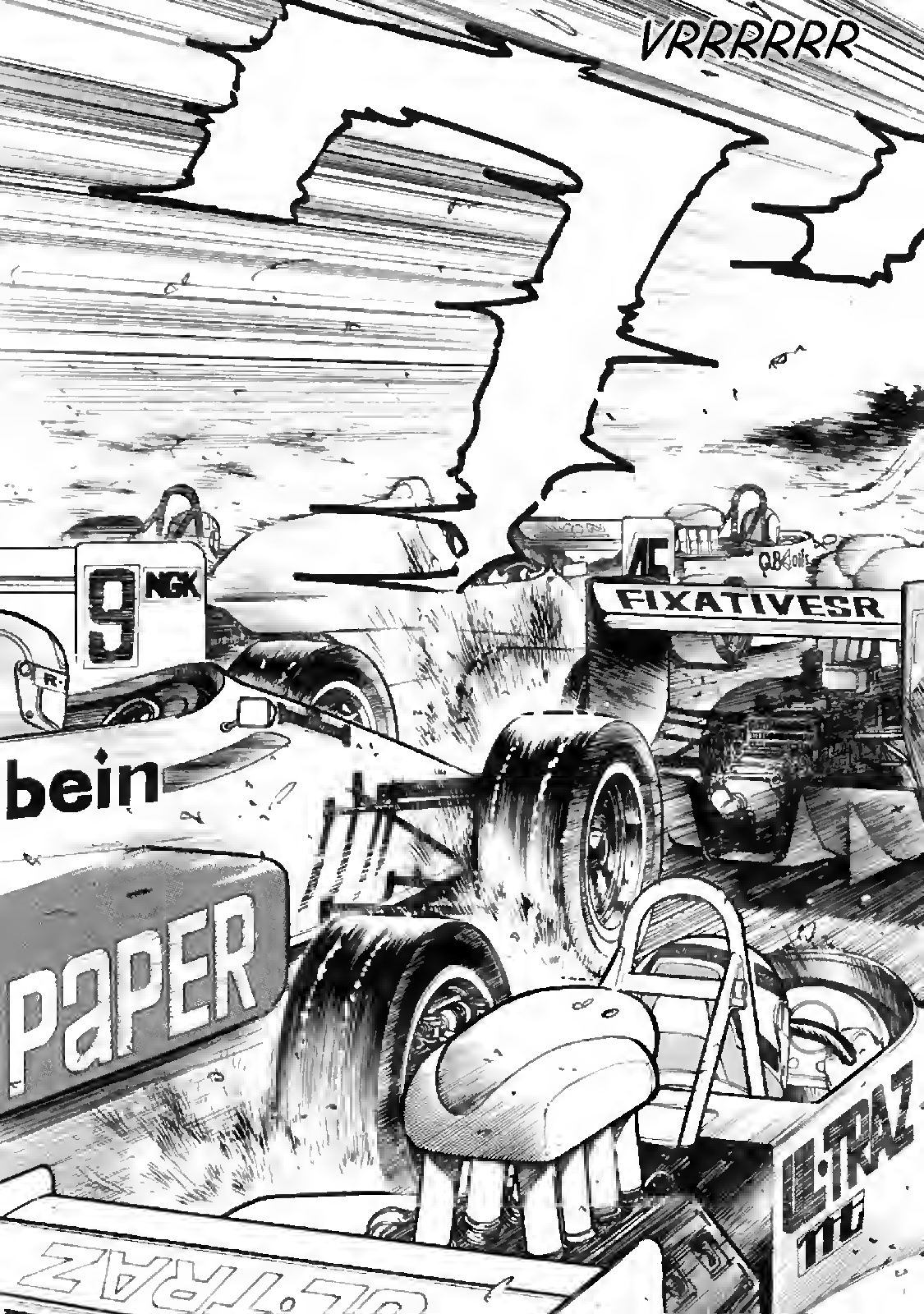

VROOOOOM


VROOOOOM

NOVEL
31
Marlboro
926
926
926

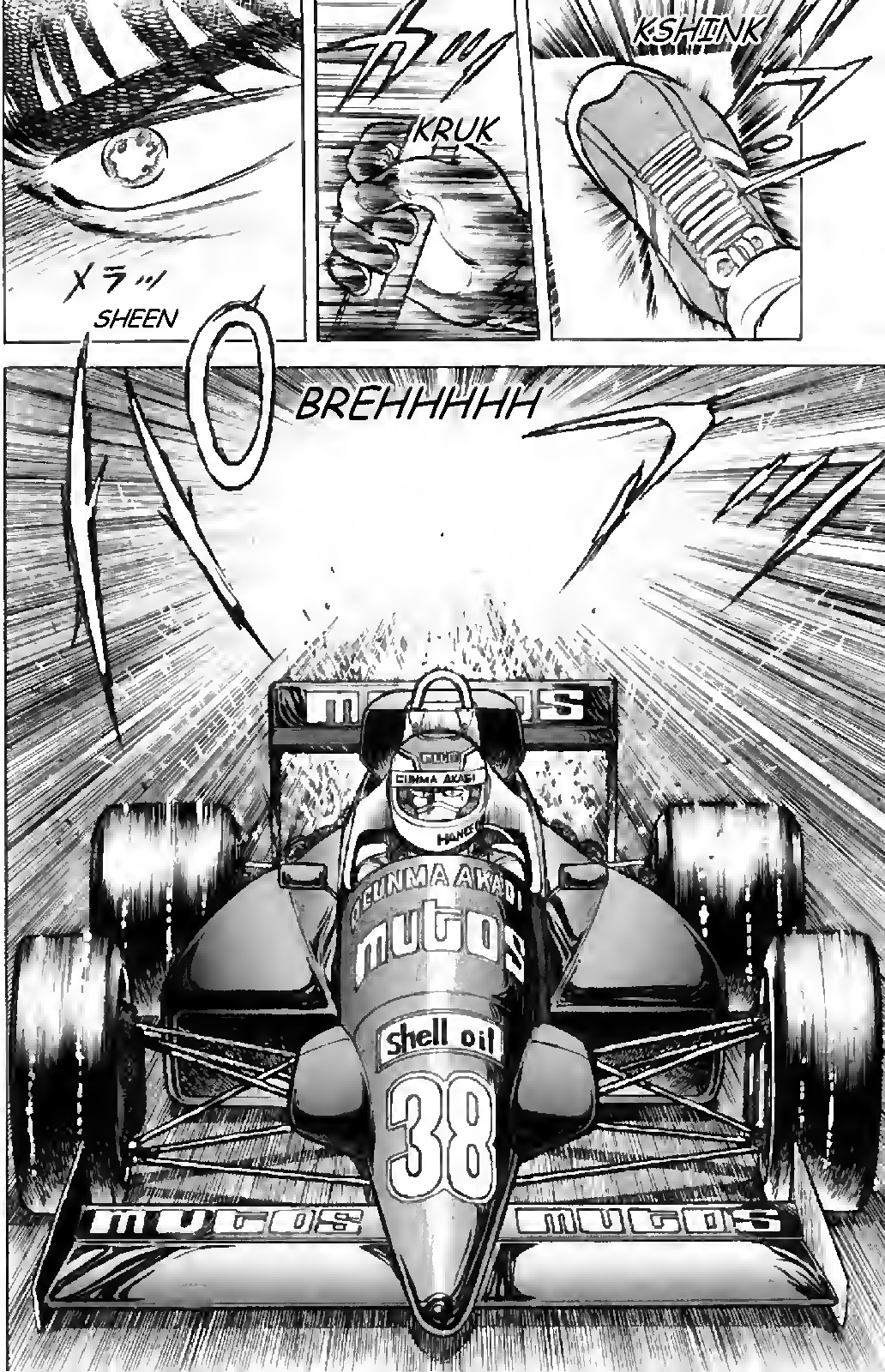
VRRRRRR VRRRRRR
BREHHHH
9 NGK
FIXATIVESR
IASTER
THINNE
bein
PAPER
OLTRAZ
OLTRAZ

VRRRRRR
BREHHHH
IASTER
THINNE

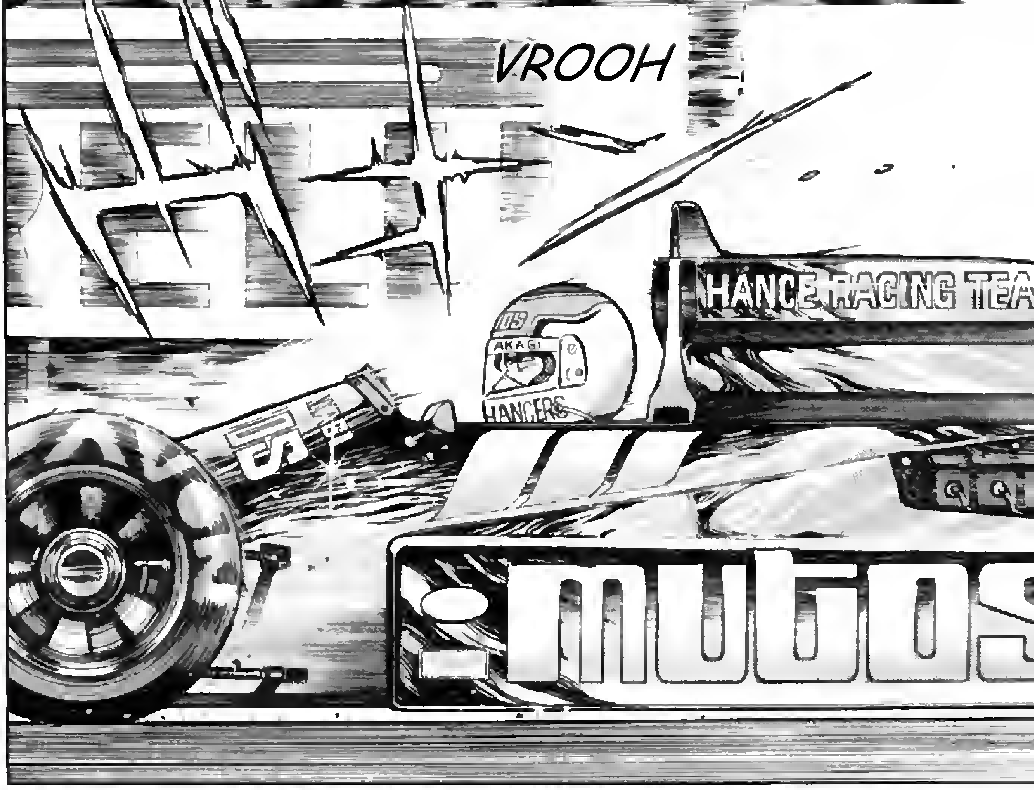

VRRRRRR
9
NGK
FIXATIVESR
bein
PAPER
ULTRAZ
TIO

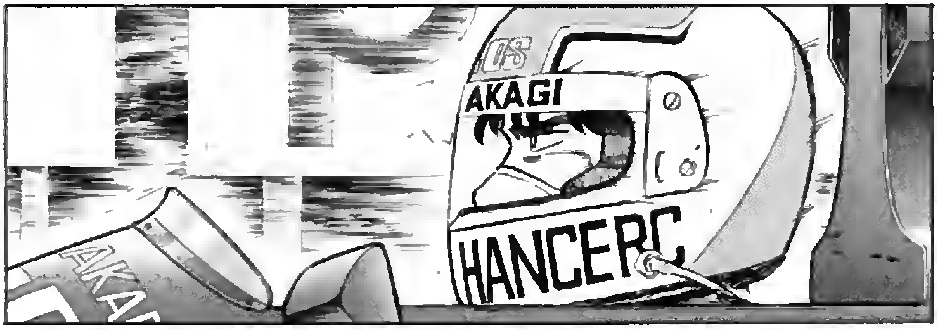
VRRRRR
Get going!
Geez!
Gotta move forward.
Come on! Where's Gunma at!?
OTOYA
DE-PAL
AVESA

MURMUR MURMUR
The Jerez Circuit's full of twists and turns, so there aren't many areas to pass.
Getting beyond that chaos at the start of the race is essential to win!
Yes! He's moved past the confusion and still in third!
Damn!
GPa
TOYA
But torque is still an issue!
It's not surprising considering his poor showing at the pre-liminary.
And look at Otoya stuck in that rush hour traffic!
...now that he's a seasoned driver in the European circuits.
Let's see if Gunma gets it...
JEREZ
Dry Sac Corner
Michelin Corner
Home Straight
Angel Corner
First Corner
The Jerez Circuit has a lot of tight corners, and I think goin' at full torque out of the corners is important to get ahead.
That's all Greek to me!


KSHINK
KRUK
SHEEN
BREHHHHH
GENMA AKAGI
mugos
Shell oil
38

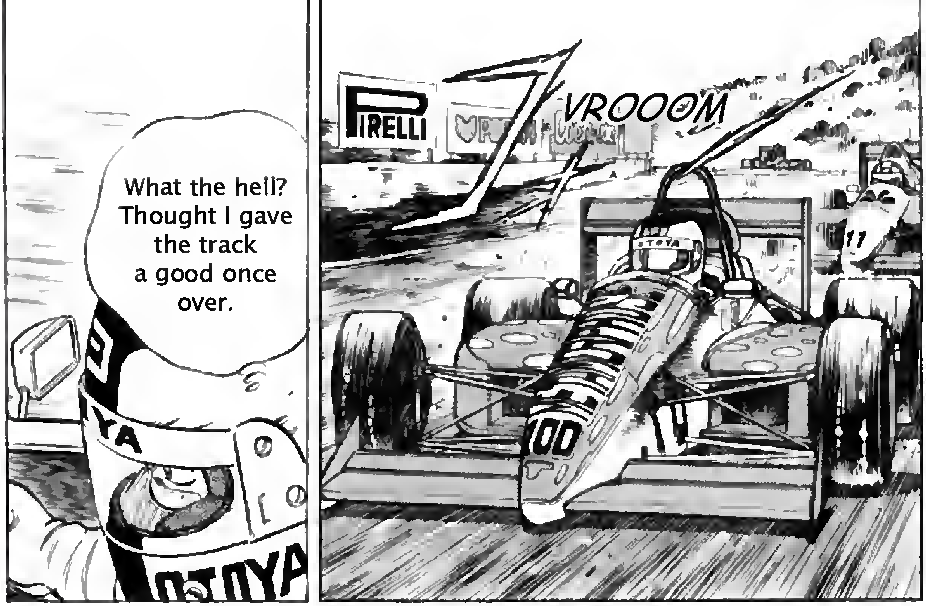
Chapter 6: Perfection

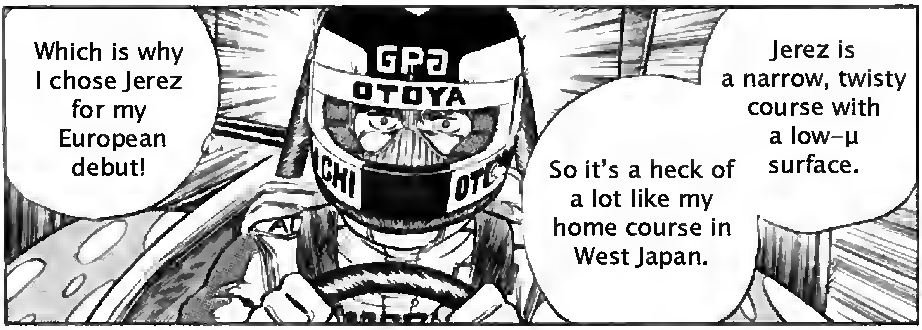

VROOH
HANCE RACING TEA
AKAGI
HANCERC
MUGOS


AKAGI
HANCERC

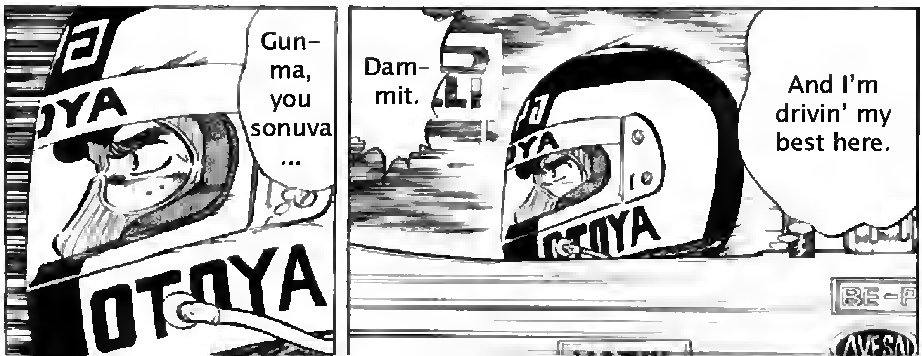
Engine looks good.
Seventeen laps to go.
I'm in third, Otoya's in 10th, and Davey's in sixth...
AKAGI
HANCERC

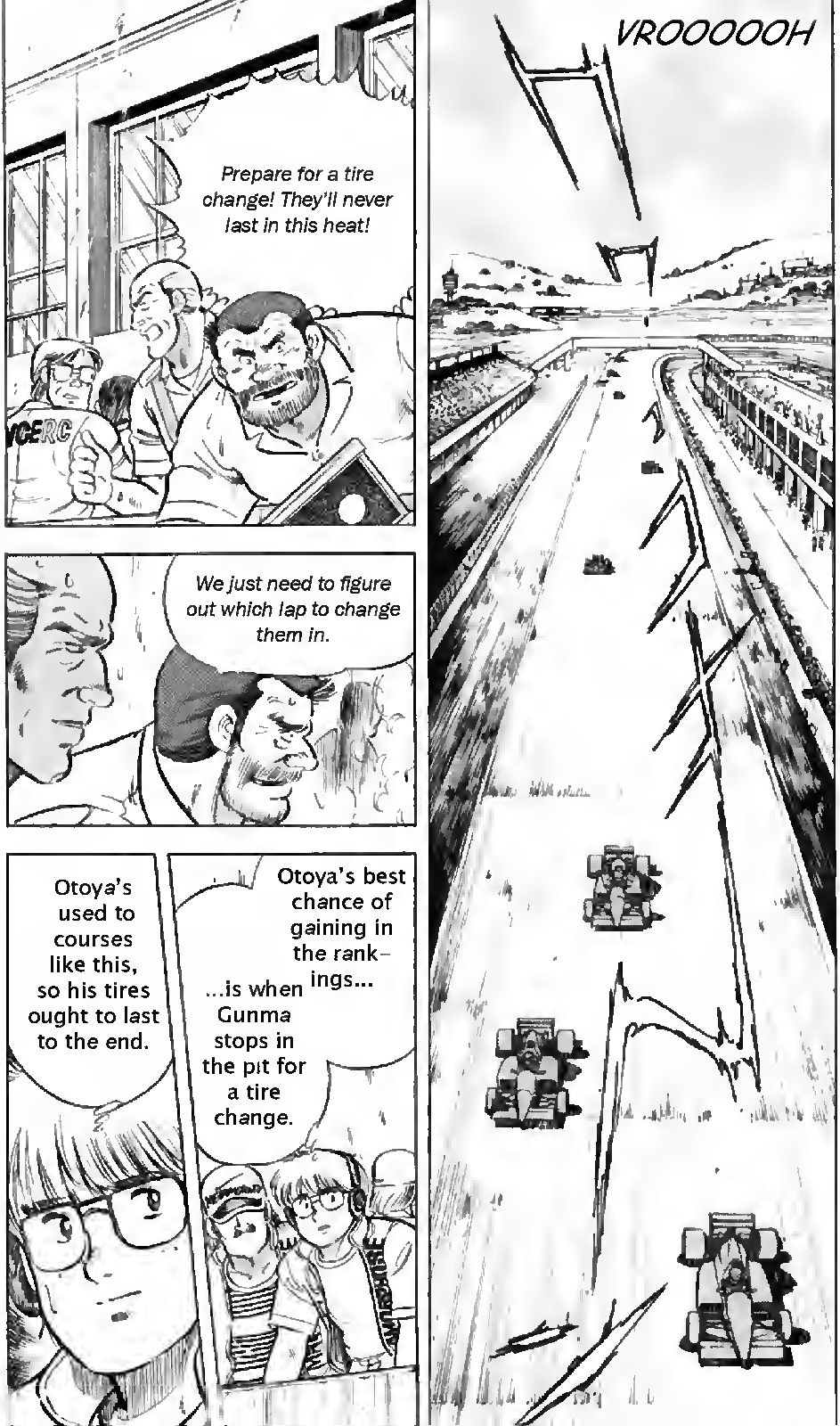
VROOH.
TIO PEPE
The track's pretty dry.
And it's hot out.
Junko's watching.
Tamotsu's watching.
Even Kuroi and the others.
I don't think my tires will last the full run.
AKAGI
VROOOOM
AVON
...waitin' for me in London.
Her and Pea-bow.
Sako's ...

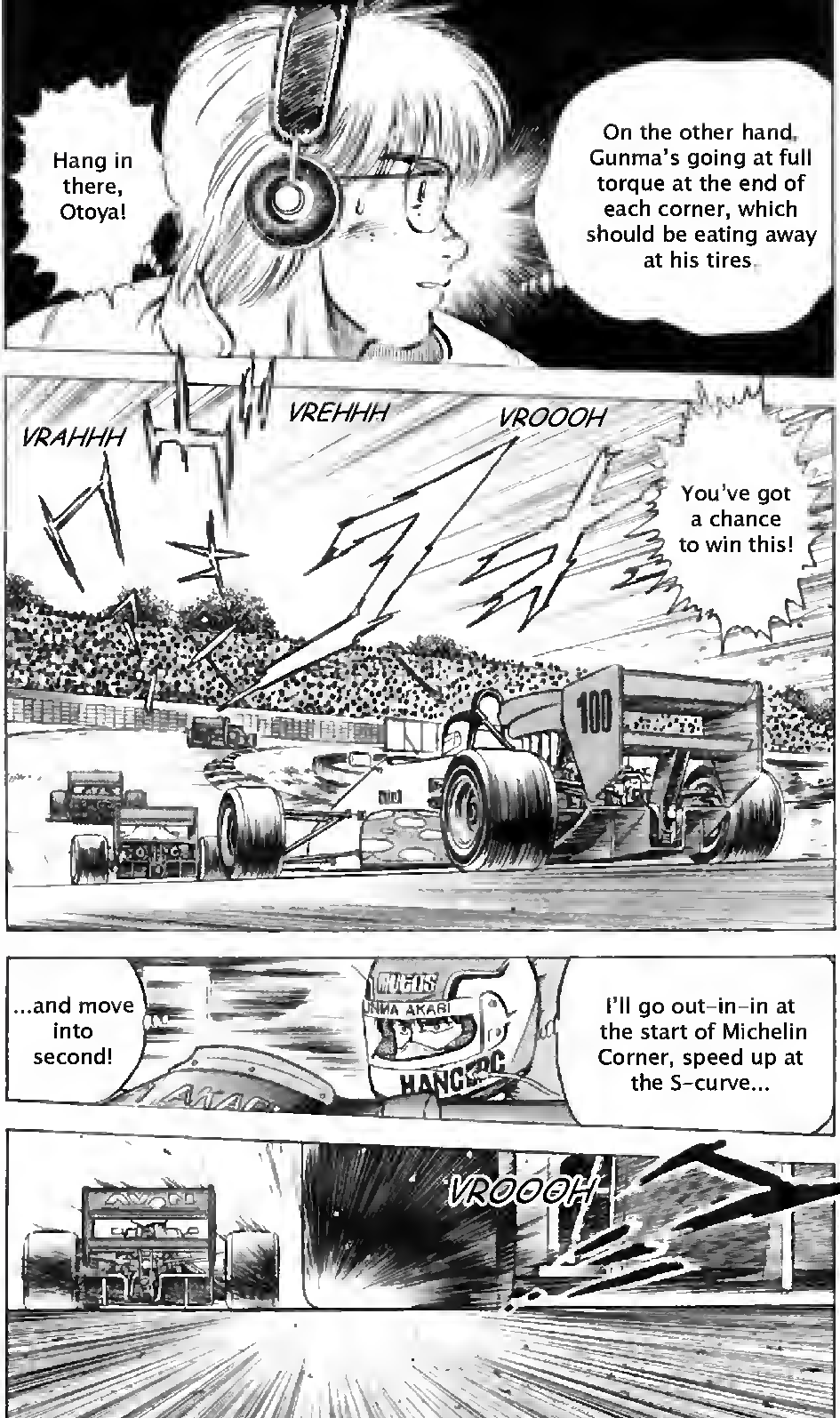

What the hell? Thought I gave the track a good once over.
VROOOM
PIRELLI
OTOYA
11
100

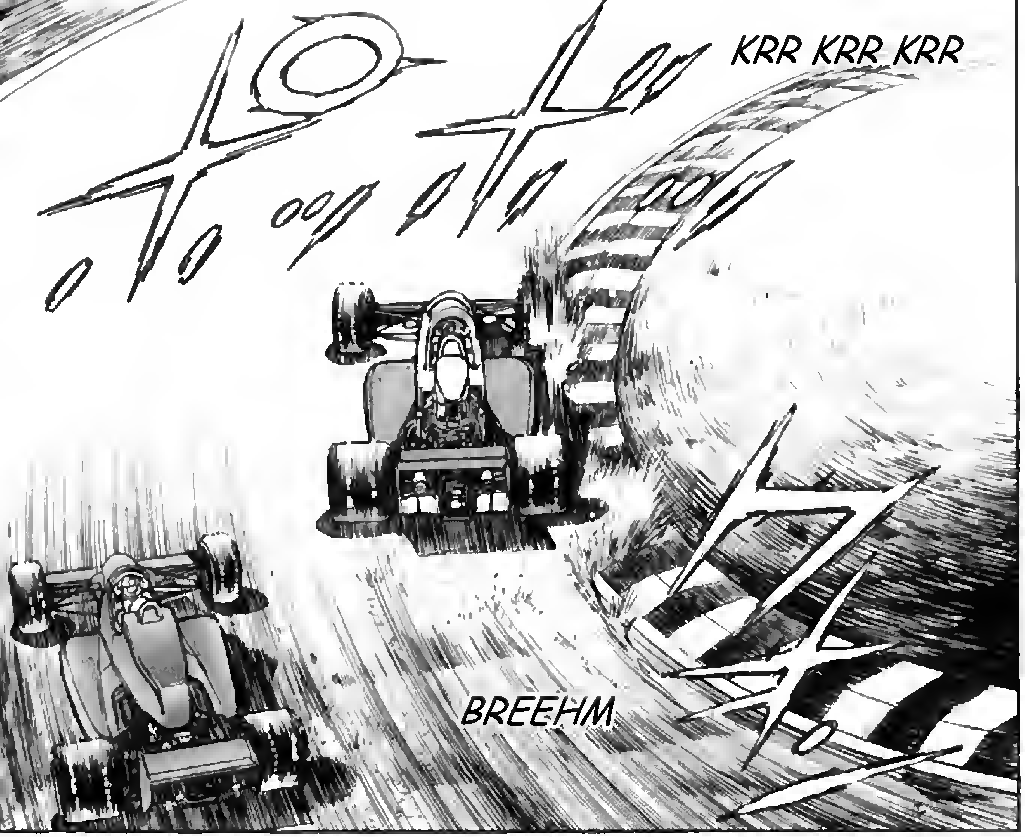

Which is why I chose Jerez for my European debut!
So it's a heck of a lot like my home course in West Japan.
Jerez is a narrow, twisty course with a low-μ surface.
GP2
OTOYA

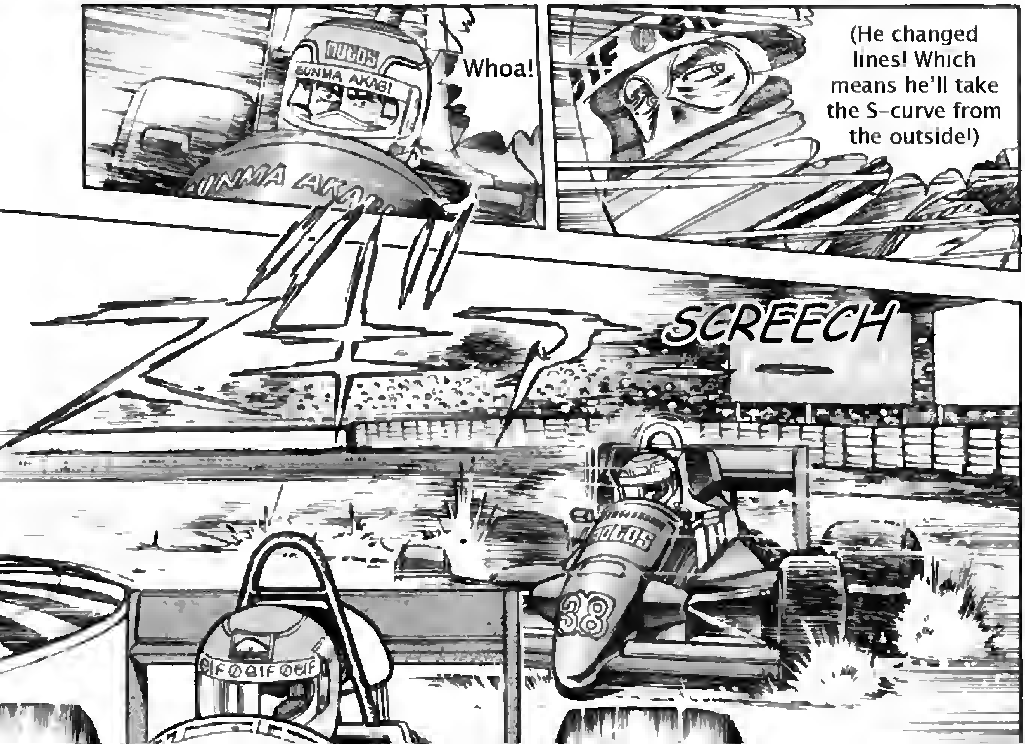
Maybe what they say about the high level of racing in Europe is true.
I've gone 30 laps already and I'm still in 10th...
So how come I'm not doing better!?
PIRELLI
Agip

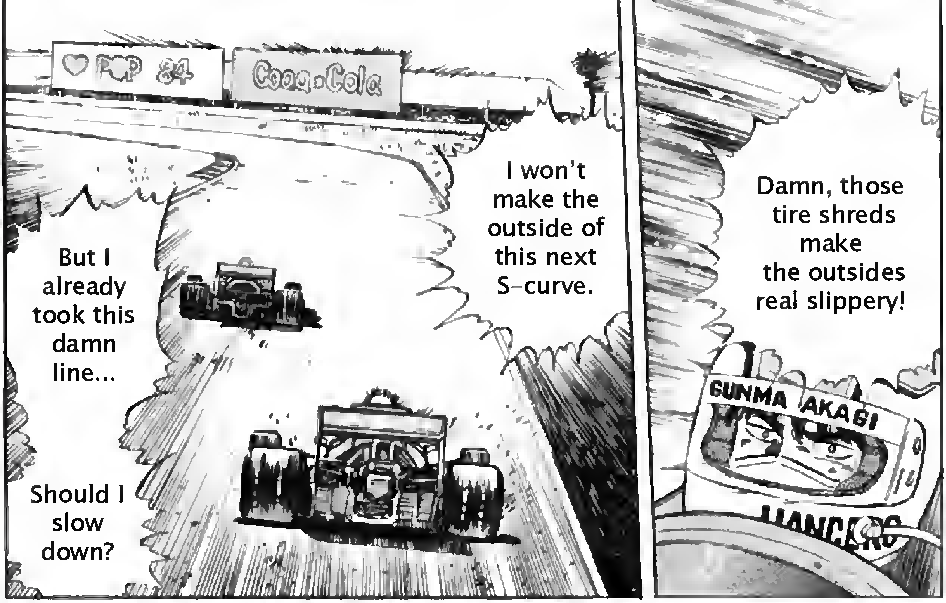

Gun-ma, you sonuva...
Dam-mit.
And I'm drivin' my best here.
OTOYA


Prepare for a tire change! They'll never last in this heat!
We just need to figure out which lap to change them in.
Otoya's used to courses like this, so his tires ought to last to the end.
Otoya's best chance of gaining in the rankings... ...is when Gunma stops in the pit for a tire change.
VROOOOOH


Hang in there, Otoya!
On the other hand, Gunma's going at full torque at the end of each corner, which should be eating away at his tires.
VRAHHH
VREHHH
VROOOH
You've got a chance to win this!
100
...and move into second!
I'll go out-in-in at the start of Michelin Corner, speed up at the S-curve...
VROOOH

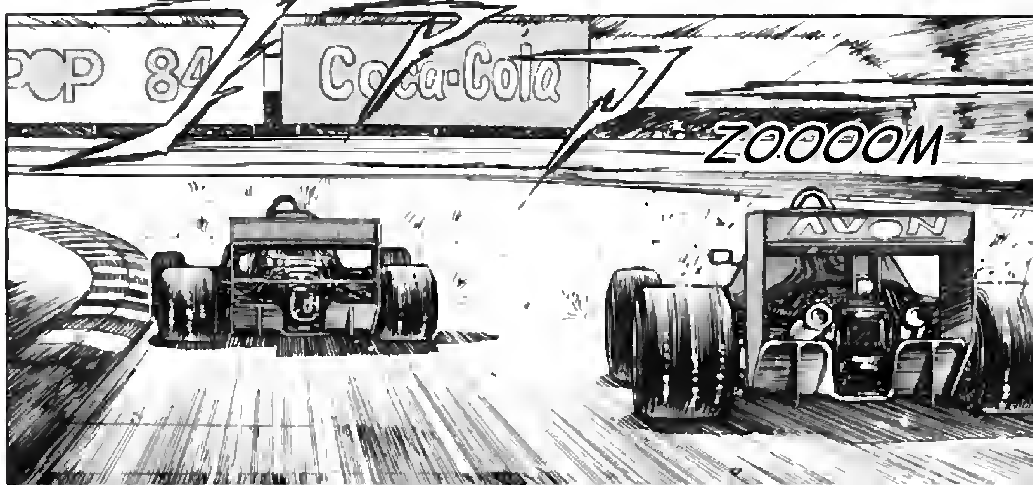

KRR KRR KRR
BREEHM

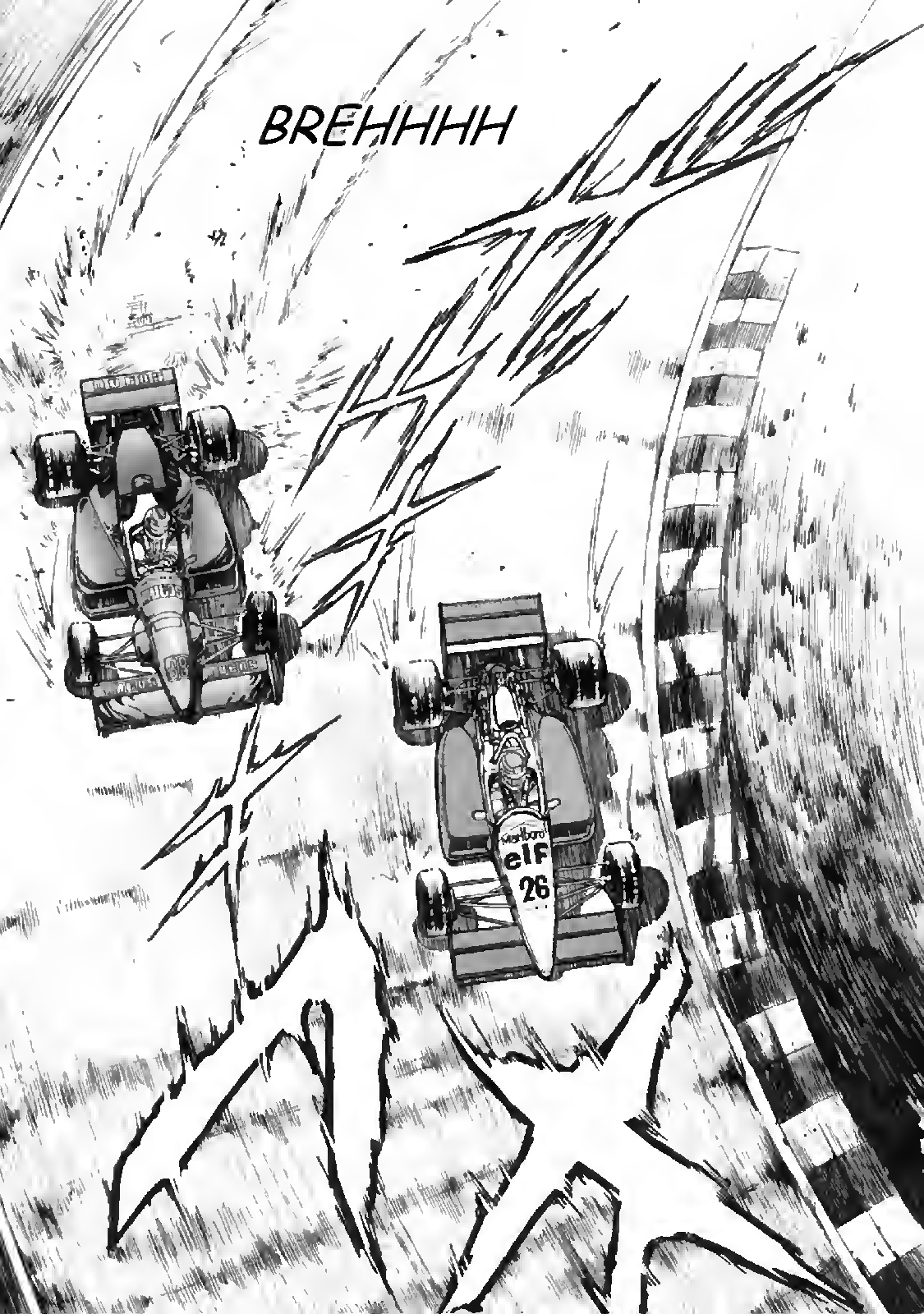

Whoa!
(He changed lines! Which means he'll take the S-curve from the outside!)
SCREECH


Coca-Cola
But I already took this damn line...
I won't make the outside of this next S-curve.
Should I slow down?
Damn, those tire shreds make the outsides real slippery!
GUNMA AKAGI

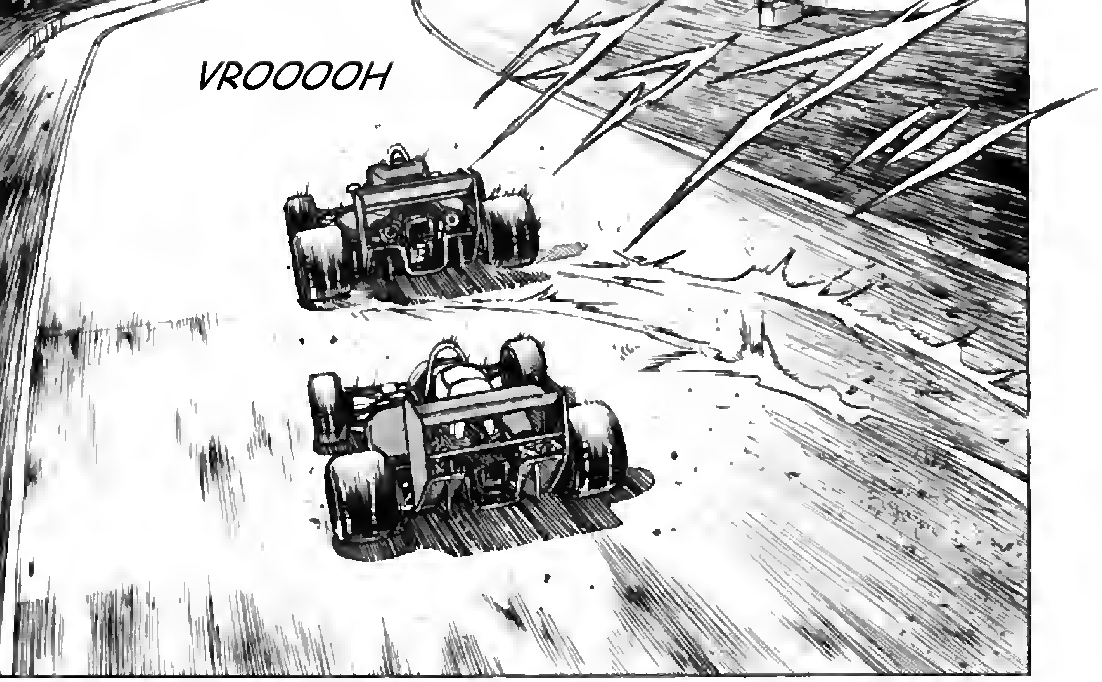
The Goddess of Victory is still on my side! And now that I'm here in Europe, your luck's about to run out!
AKAGI
Ah, screw it! Here I go!

Otoya, I'm about to make you eat those words!


Coca-Cola
ZOOOOM
AVON


BREHHHH
marlboro
elf
26

IRRK
...can't slide anymore!
Gotta stop already...
GUNMA AK
OOH
SCREECH
VROO
elf
28

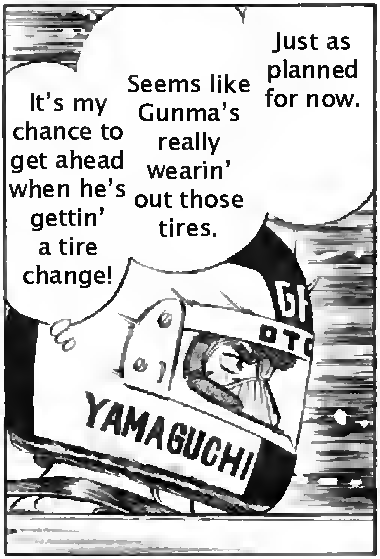

VROOOOH

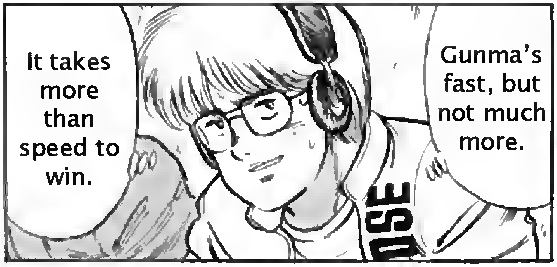
YEAH
E. Comas was unable to take the outside line, and had to brake early because of it!
Brilliant! Gunma Akagi just maneuvered past E. Comas from the outside to move into second place!

With those track condi-tions, and tires...
He's still got an advantage with his downforce setting, so he ain't spinnin', but it ain't gonna last.
Ha ha ha ha!
What a bold move, as usual. Most drivers are too afraid of slipping to stay on the same line.
He's in second now! Second!

No tire change, Gunma's nine seconds ahead of me, keep movin' forward...
GPJ
OTOYA
AMAGUCHI
FWOOP
NO TIRE CHANGE G-09

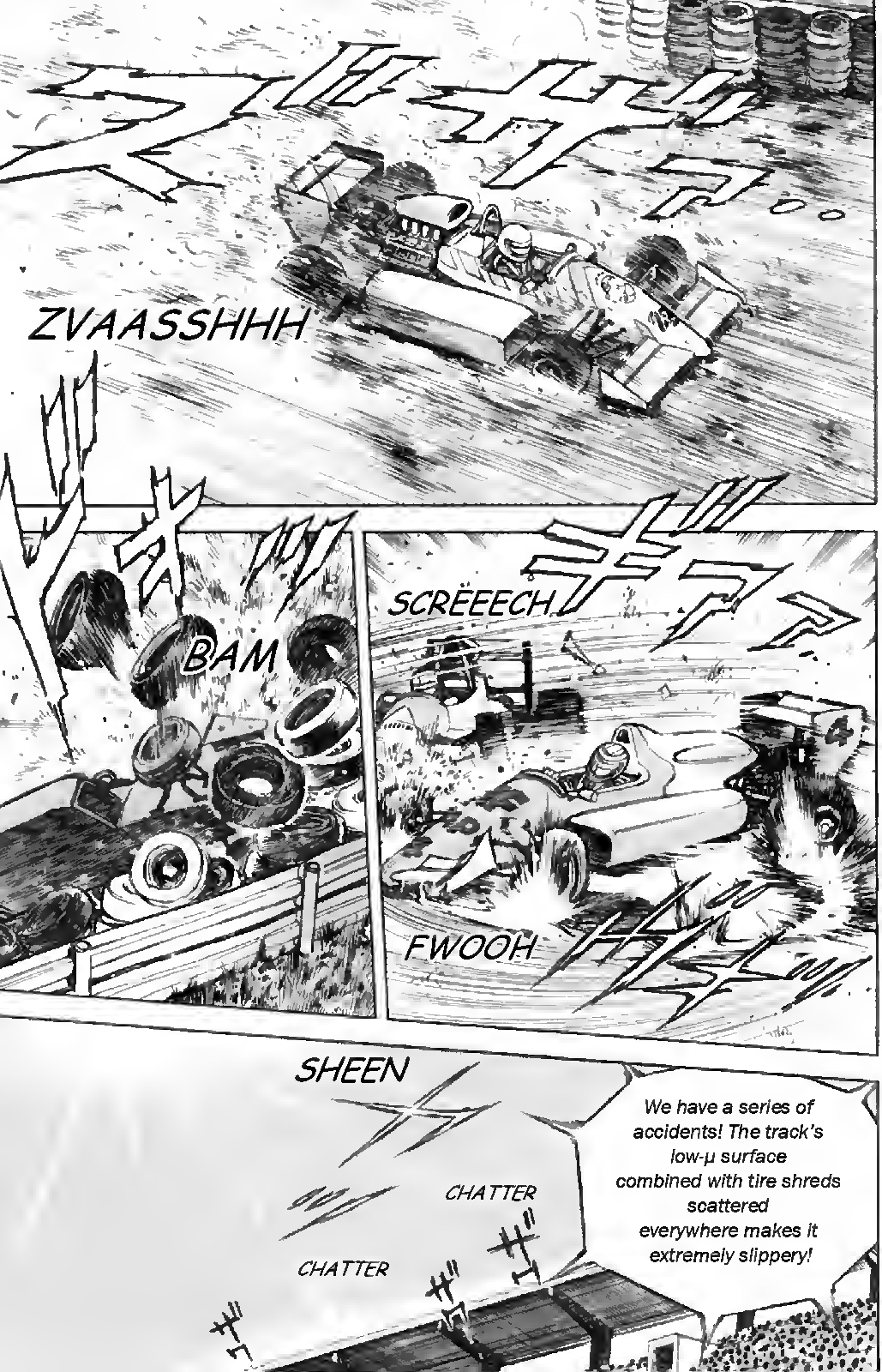
With a nine second difference, I oughtta be able to catch up if I don't stop to change tires!


Just as planned for now.
Seems like Gunma's really wearin' out those tires.
It's my chance to get ahead when he's gettin' a tire change!
YAMAGUCHI


It takes more than speed to win.
Gunma's fast, but not much more.

...so he can take it easy on his car!
So the best thing for Gunma to do is move into the top spot as soon as possible...

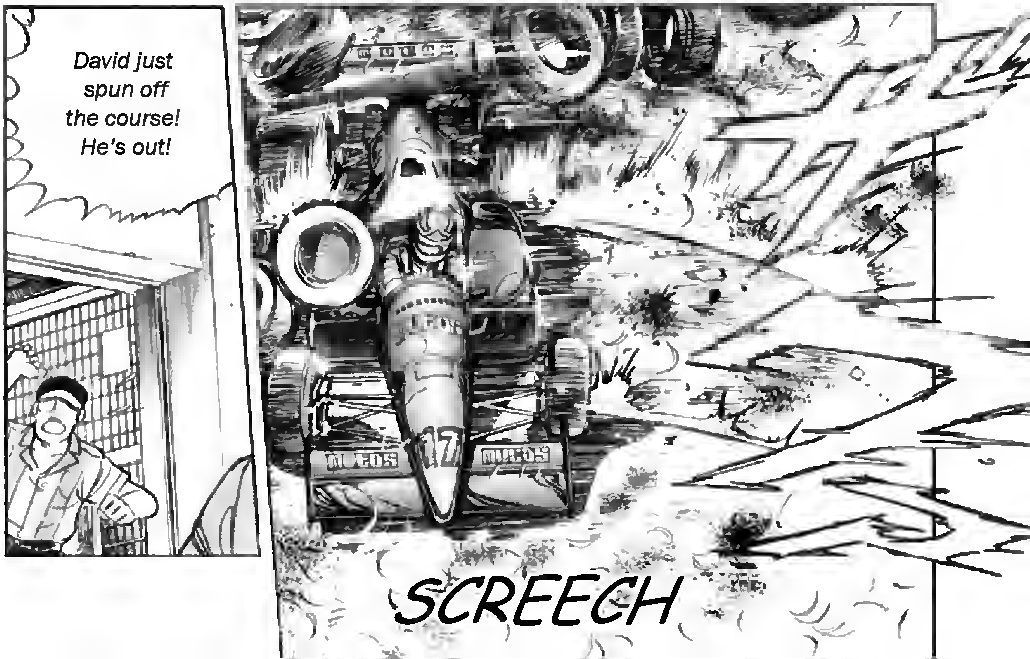
Otherwise he can't make the last 10 laps!



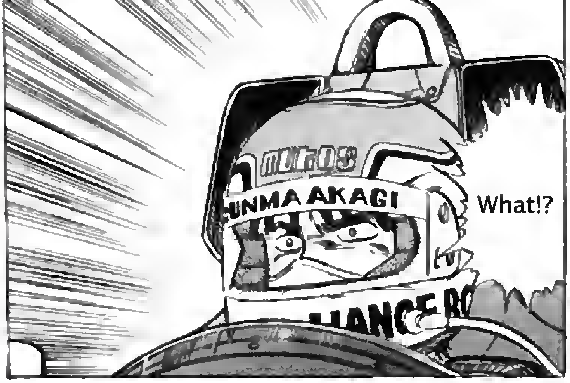
※coefficient of friction

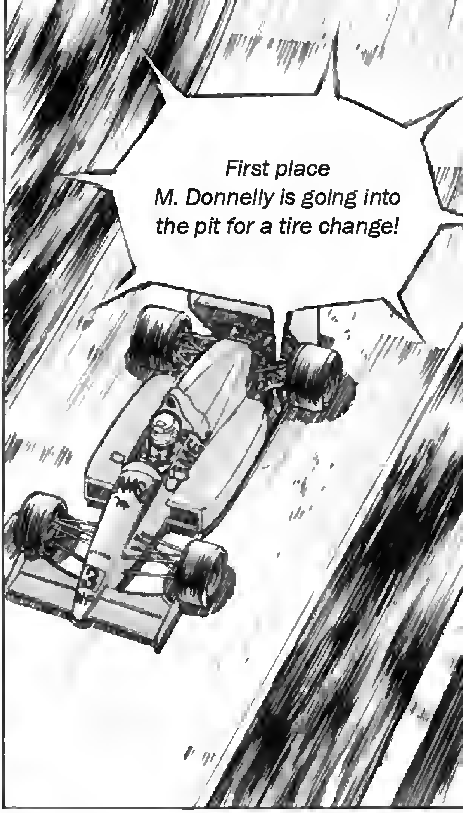
Hang in there, Avon. Just a little longer.
There's Donnelly in first!
SHOOM

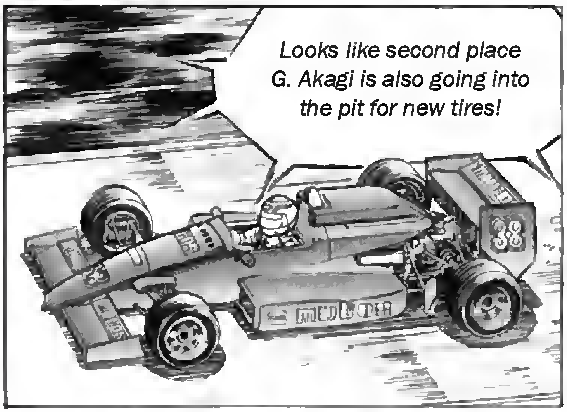
But his tires are balding, and the track is slick!
Should we bring him into the pit?
No, he's closing in on first place!


David just spun off the course! He's out!
SCREECH

VROOOH
Come on...
VREHHH
PIT IN
Bring Gunma into the pit! If he spins off the course we've got nothing!
A tire change? But I'm so close to first...
BRAAAAAAAH
What should I do?
Marlboro
Marl
PEPE
HANGE RACING TEAM


GUNMA AKAGI
What!?


First place
M. Donnelly is going into the pit for a tire change!

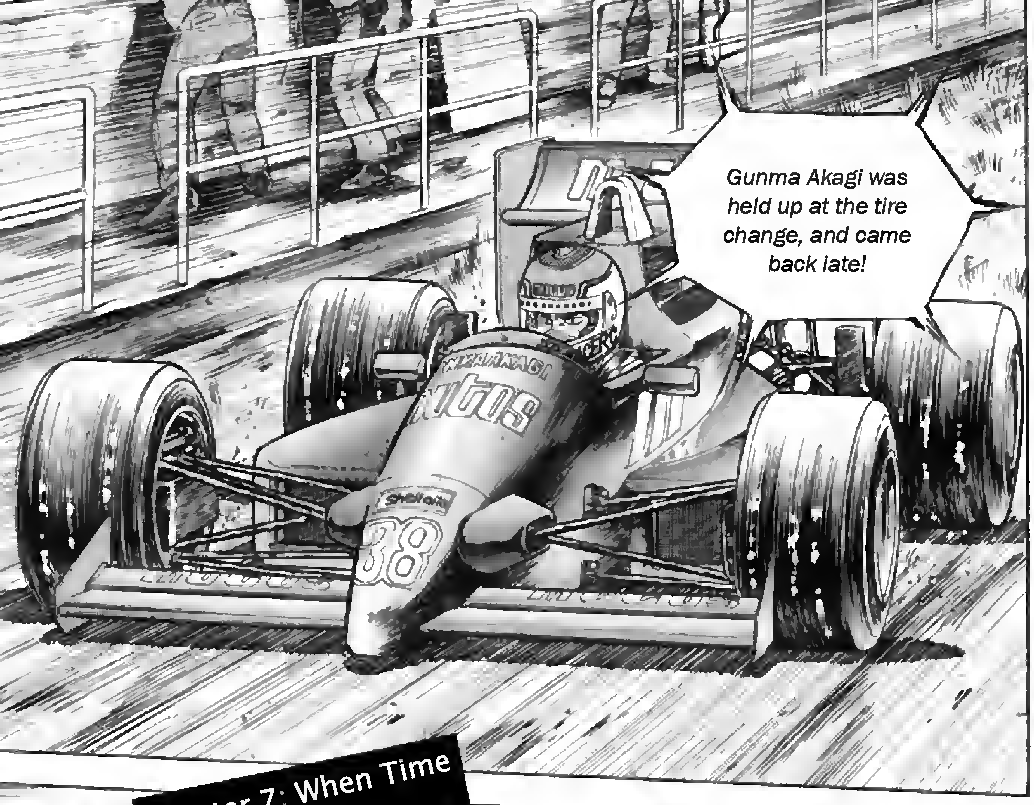

Looks like second place
G. Akagi is also going into the pit for new tires!

He's in!
BRAKE

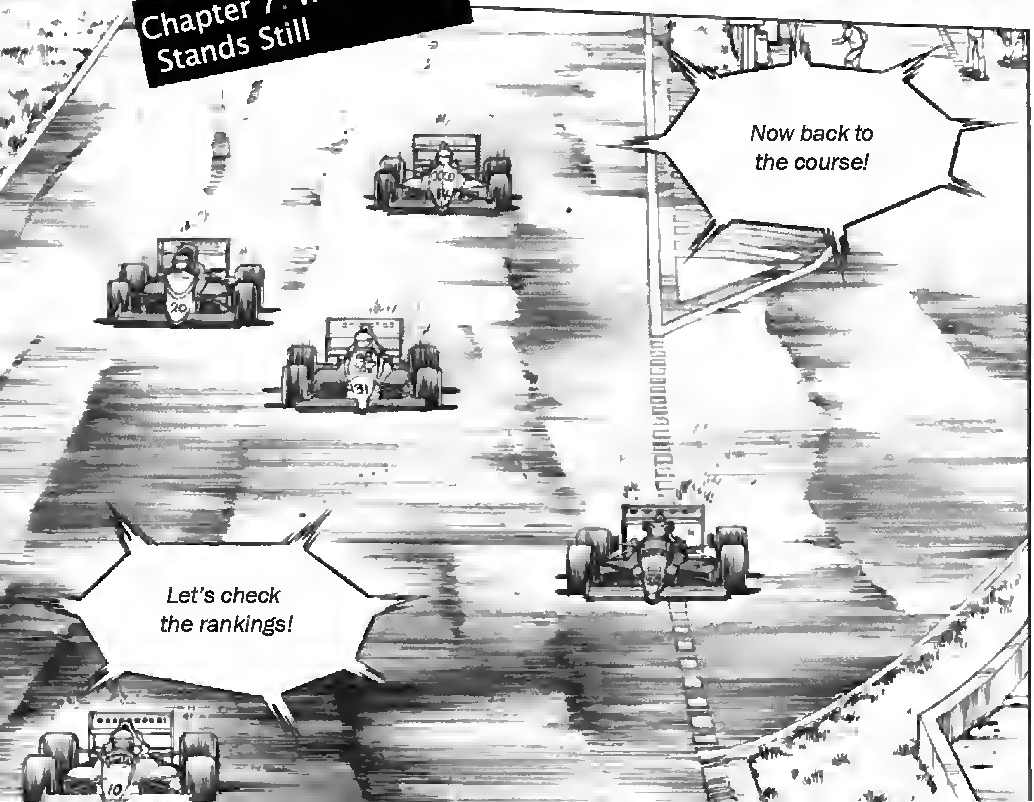
GADUNK
BRAKE
AKAGI

Somebody answer!
What's my time difference with Otoya!?
PLUK
AKAGI
HANCERC
...
So you are worried about Otoya...
About 9 sec-onds!
Shell Oils
VROOOOOOH
M. Donnelly's back on the track!
09:25
Gunma Akagi's still in the pit!
09:51

Go!
Go!
Go!
He's still not out!
KAGI
KAGI
...
11:38
There he is!
AVON
ROOOOOAR
11:69

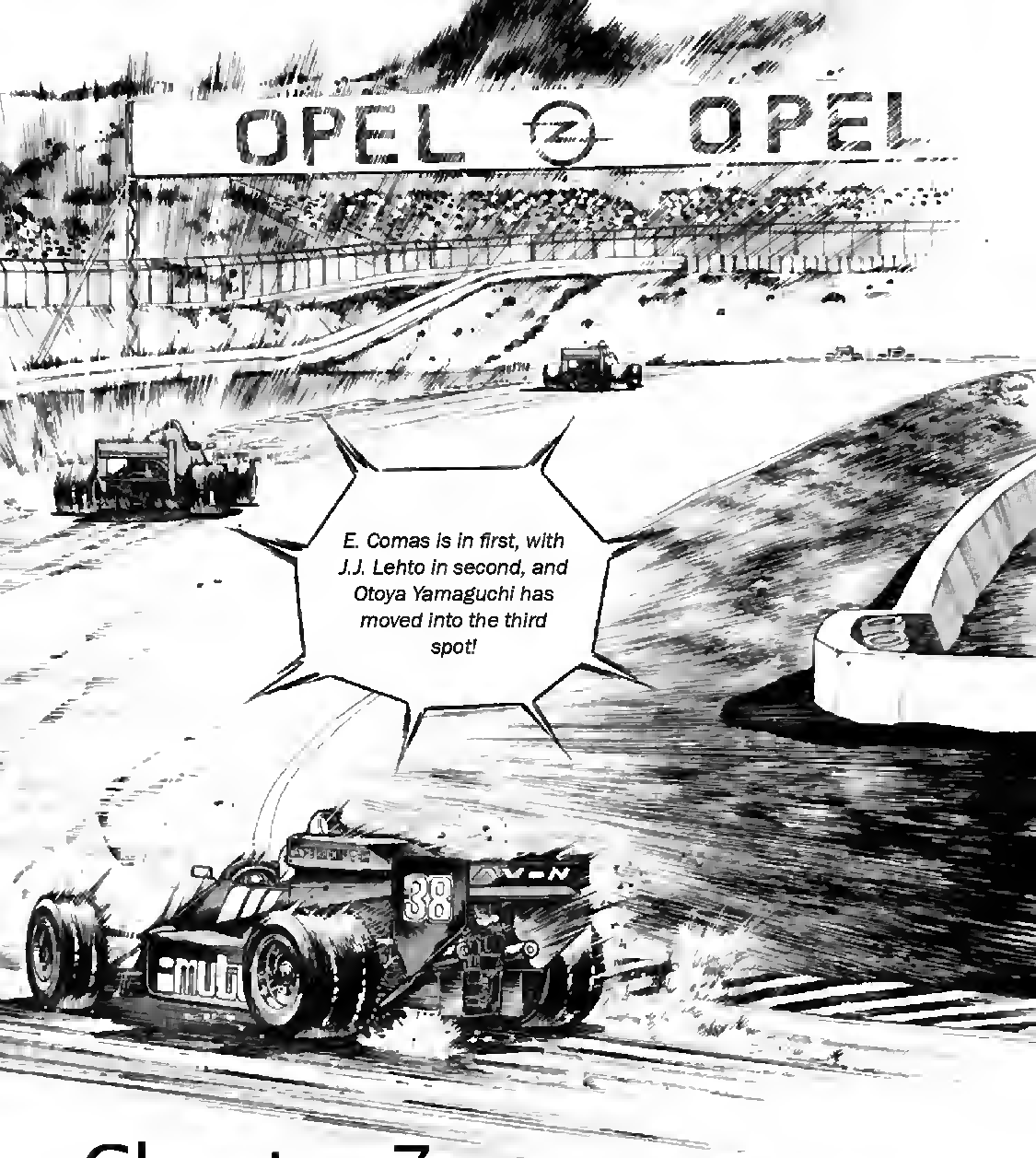


Chapter 7: When Time Stands Still



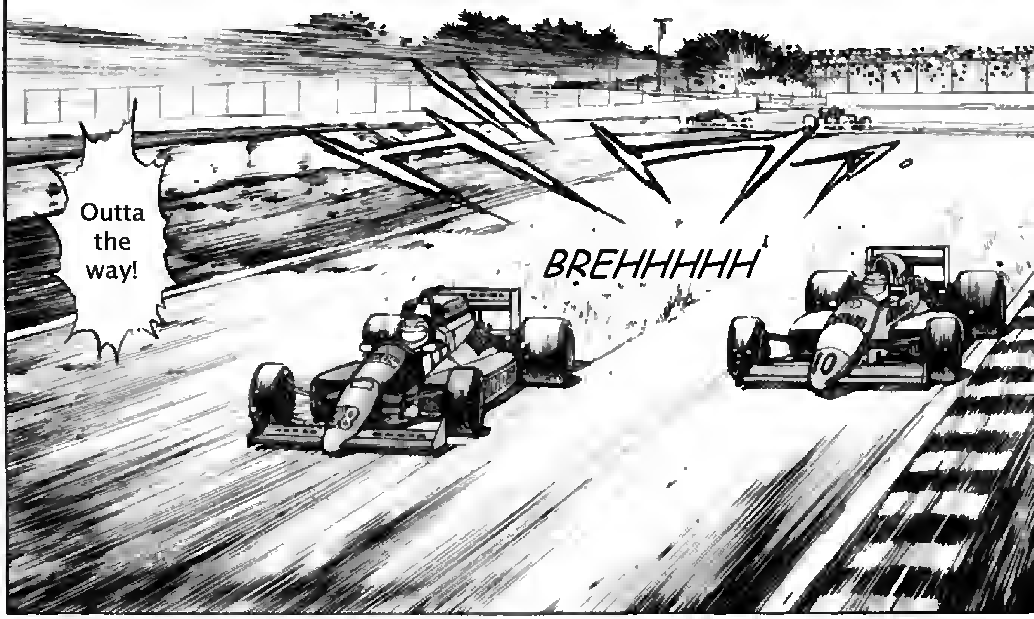
OPEL
OPEL
FIXAIVESR
38
E. Comas is in first, with J.J. Lehto in second, and Otoya Yamaguchi has moved into the third spot!
Donnelly is now in fifth, and Akagi fell into sixth place!

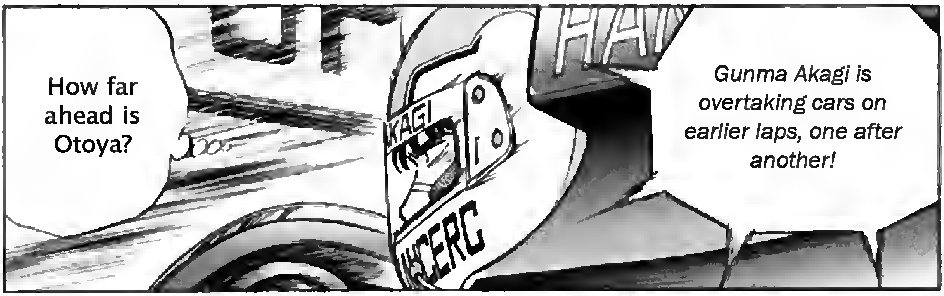
Chapter 7: When Time Stands Still

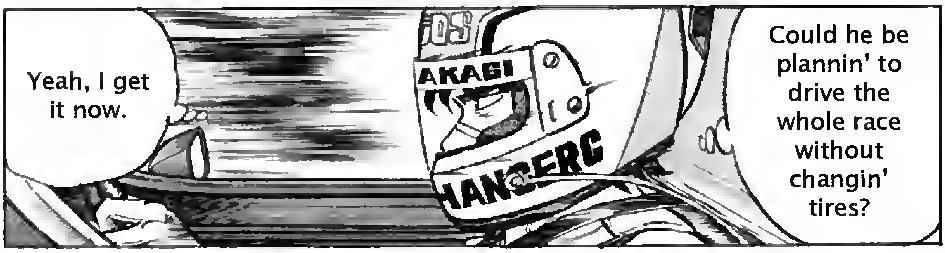


Chapter 7: When Time Stands Still

Donnelly is now in fifth, and Akagi fell into sixth place!

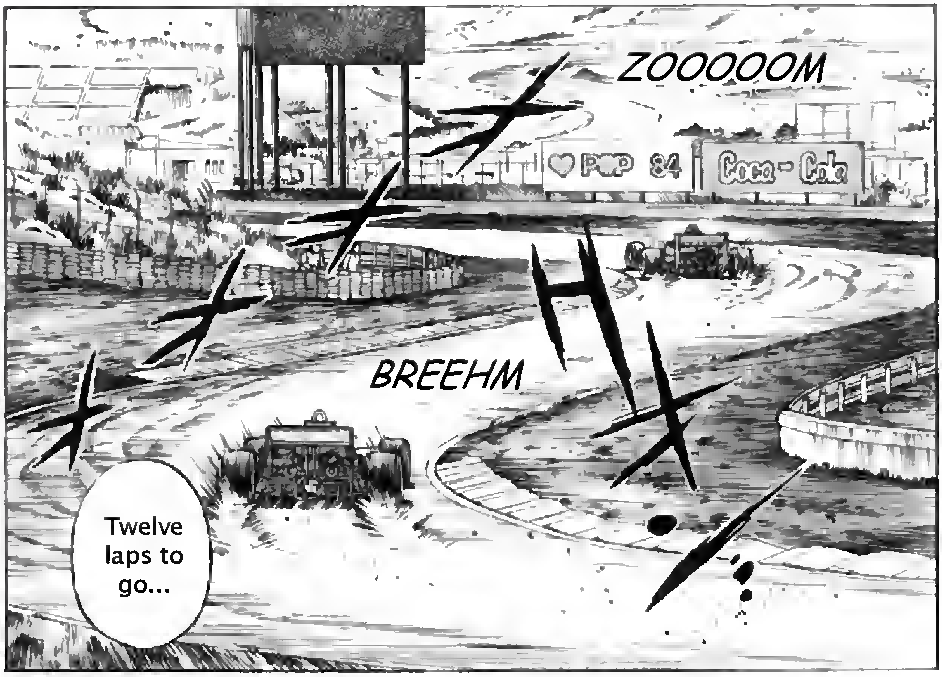

Outta the way!
BREHHHHH!


How far ahead is Otoya?
Gunma Akagi is overtaking cars on earlier laps, one after another!

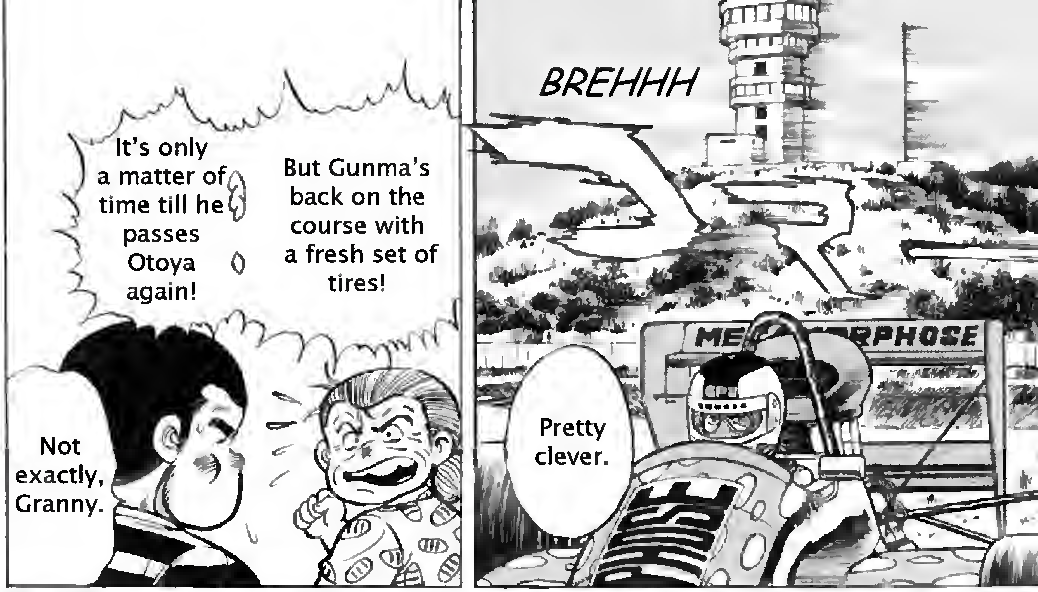

Yeah, I get it now.
AKAGI
Could he be plannin' to drive the whole race without changin' tires?

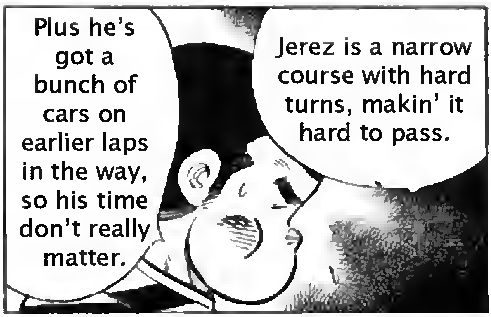
The Goddess of Victory is on my side!
So you are worried about Otoya...
TIO PEPE
POP 84

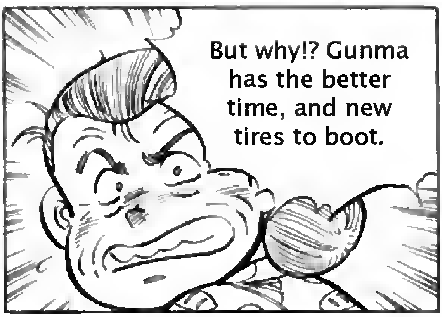
Sako and Junko are enough for me!
Well I don't need no Victory Goddess!
Oh yeah?

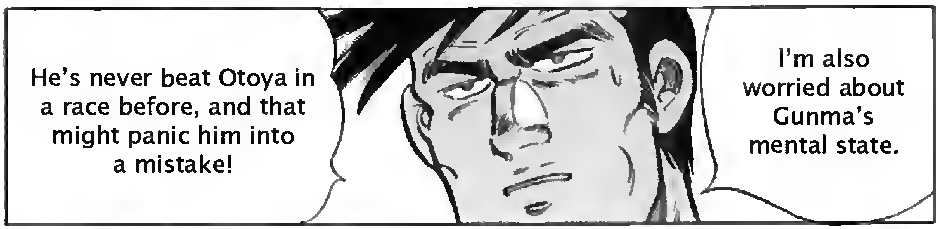

ZOOOOOM
BREEHM
Twelve laps to go...

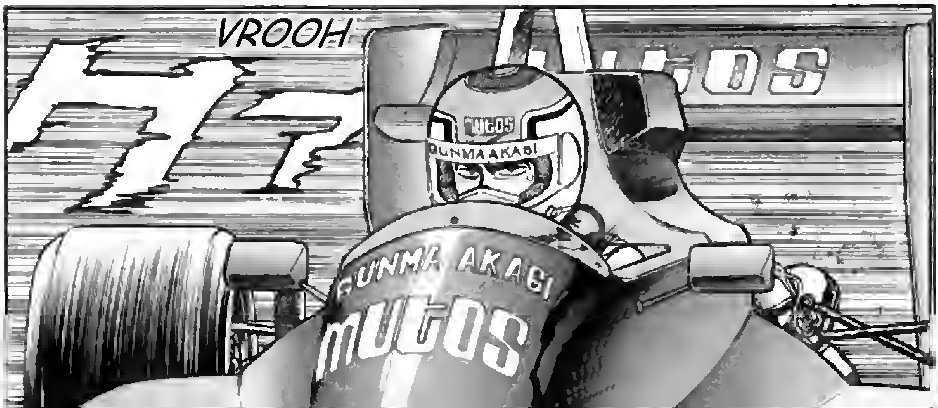
Knowing they don't got a chance in hell of out-racing Gunma, he's been riding carefully on those tires.
That might've been their strategy from the start.
Doesn't he plan on changing tires!?
Otoya's out in front.


It's only a matter of time till he passes Otoya again!
But Gunma's back on the course with a fresh set of tires!
Not exactly, Granny.
BREHHH
Pretty clever.


Plus he's got a bunch of cars on earlier laps in the way, so his time don't really matter.
Jerez is a narrow course with hard turns, makin' it hard to pass.

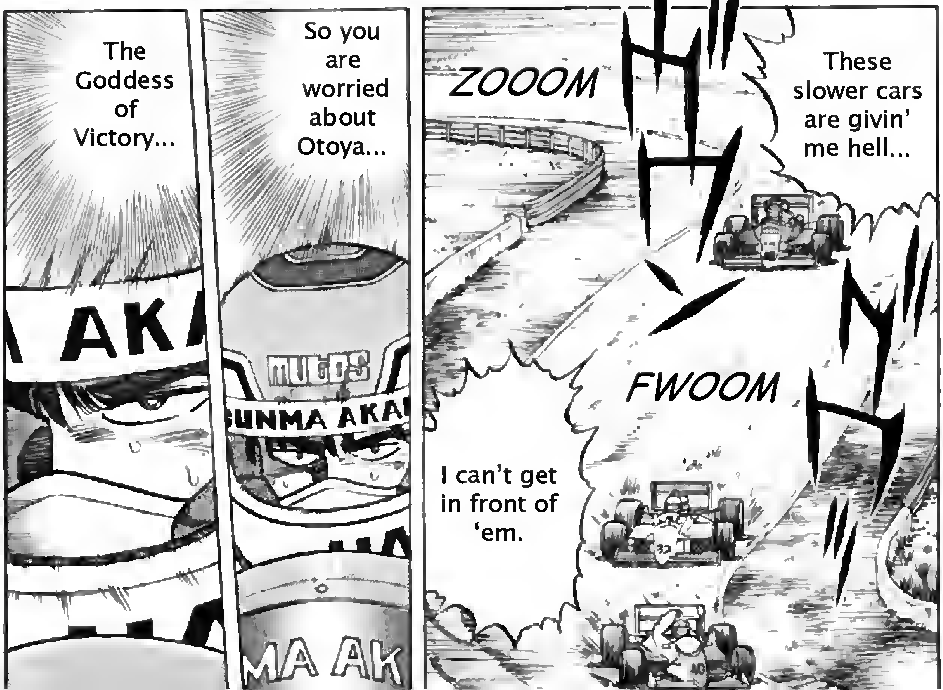

But why!? Gunma has the better time, and new tires to boot.


He's never beat Otoya in a race before, and that might panic him into a mistake!
I'm also worried about Gunma's mental state.


VROOH
GUNMA AKAGI
MUTOS

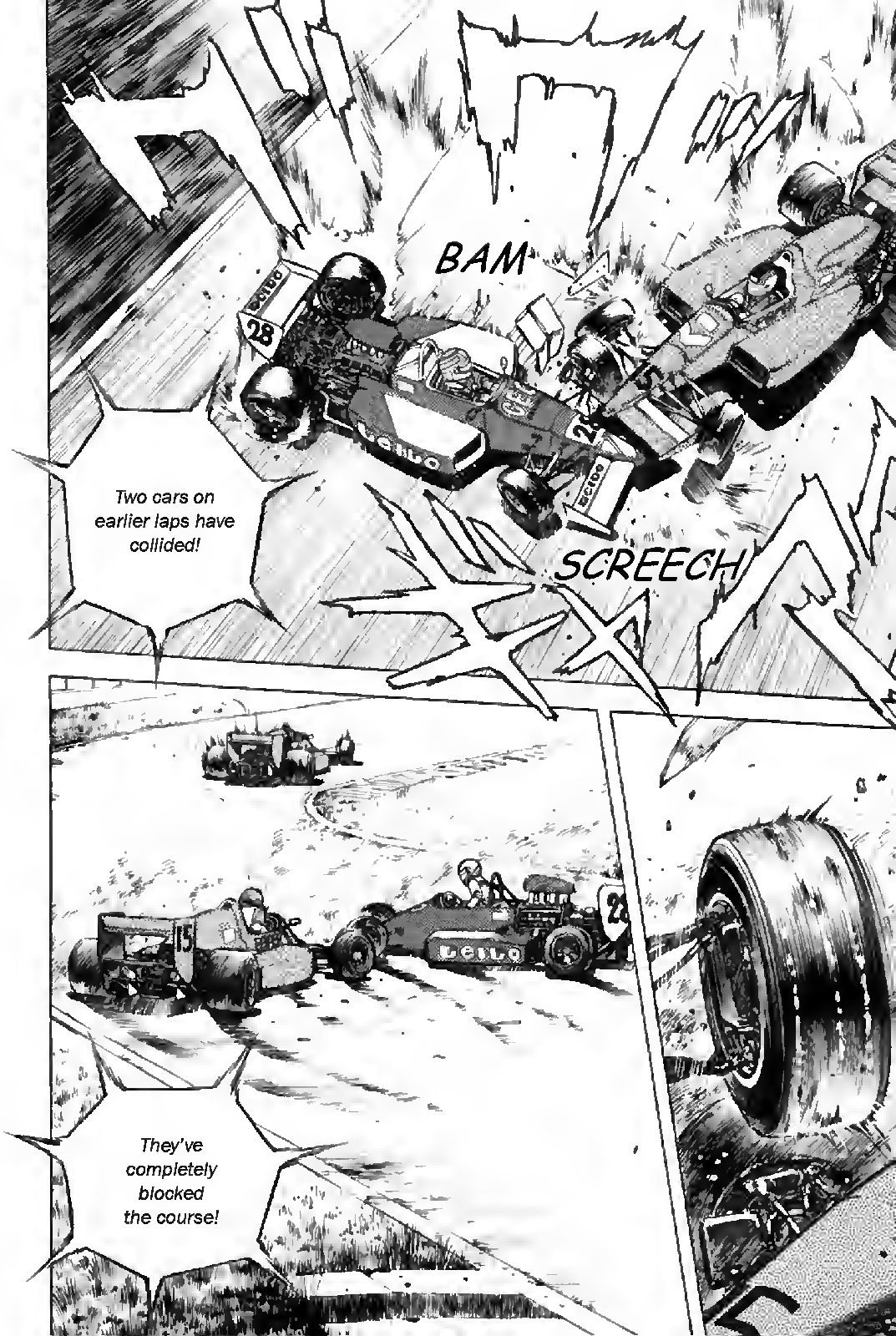
You'll never beat me with Otoya.
A little advice...

Just as I told him to.
So what's your next move, brother?
So far, he's racing exactly according to plan.
Yeah? Well Otoya's well ahead of you now, Gunma.

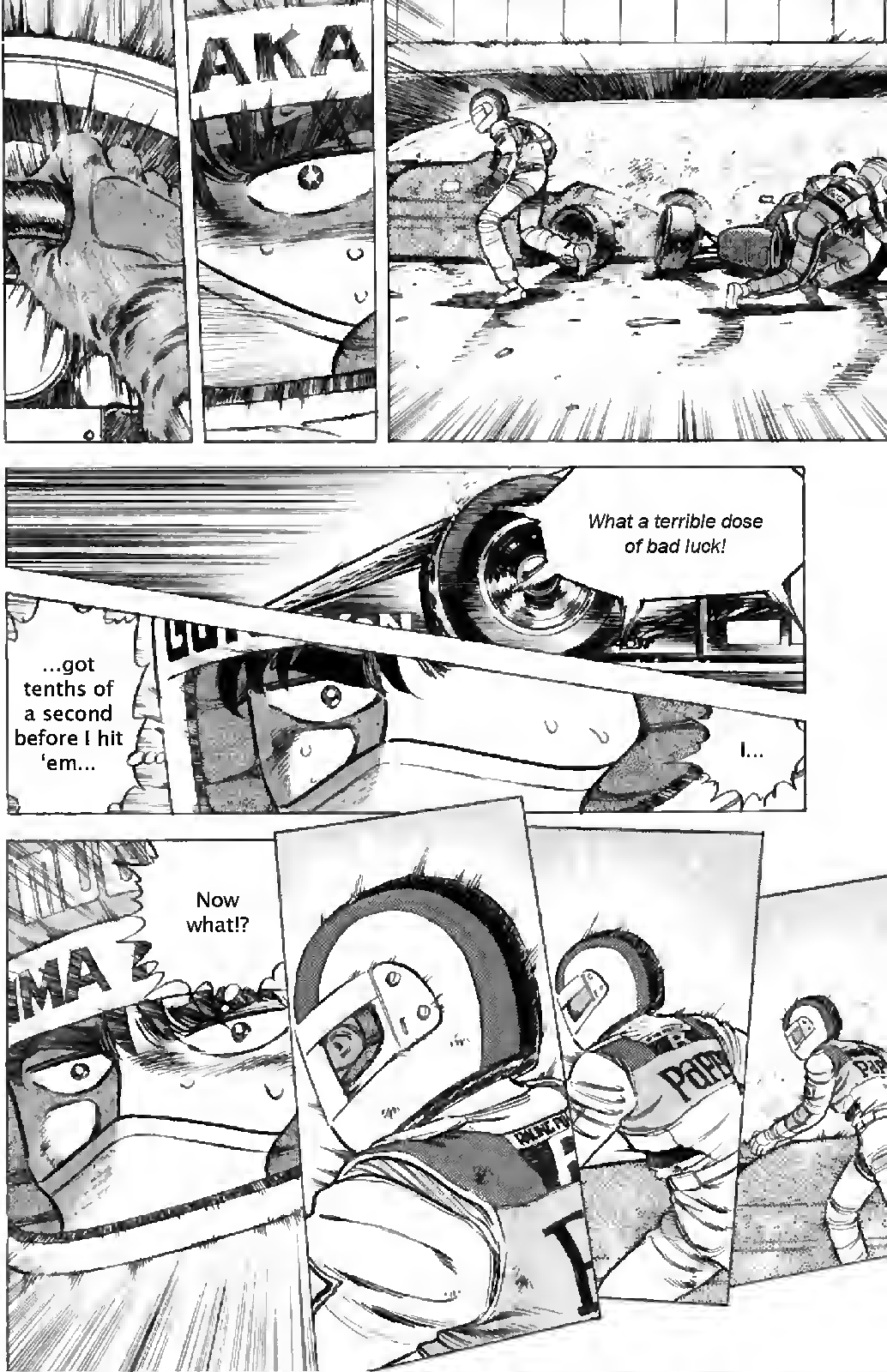

The Goddess of Victory...
So you are worried about Otoya...
ZOOOM
These slower cars are givin' me hell...
FWOOM
I can't get in front of 'em.

Nine laps to go. The current rankings are...
VROOOH
E. Comas in first, M. Donnelly in second, O. Yamaguchi in third, J.J. Lehto in fourth, G. Akagi in fifth...
Wait a minute! Akagi has moved past Lehto into fourth place!
GUNM
P-4
200
ZOOOOM
25
Marlboro

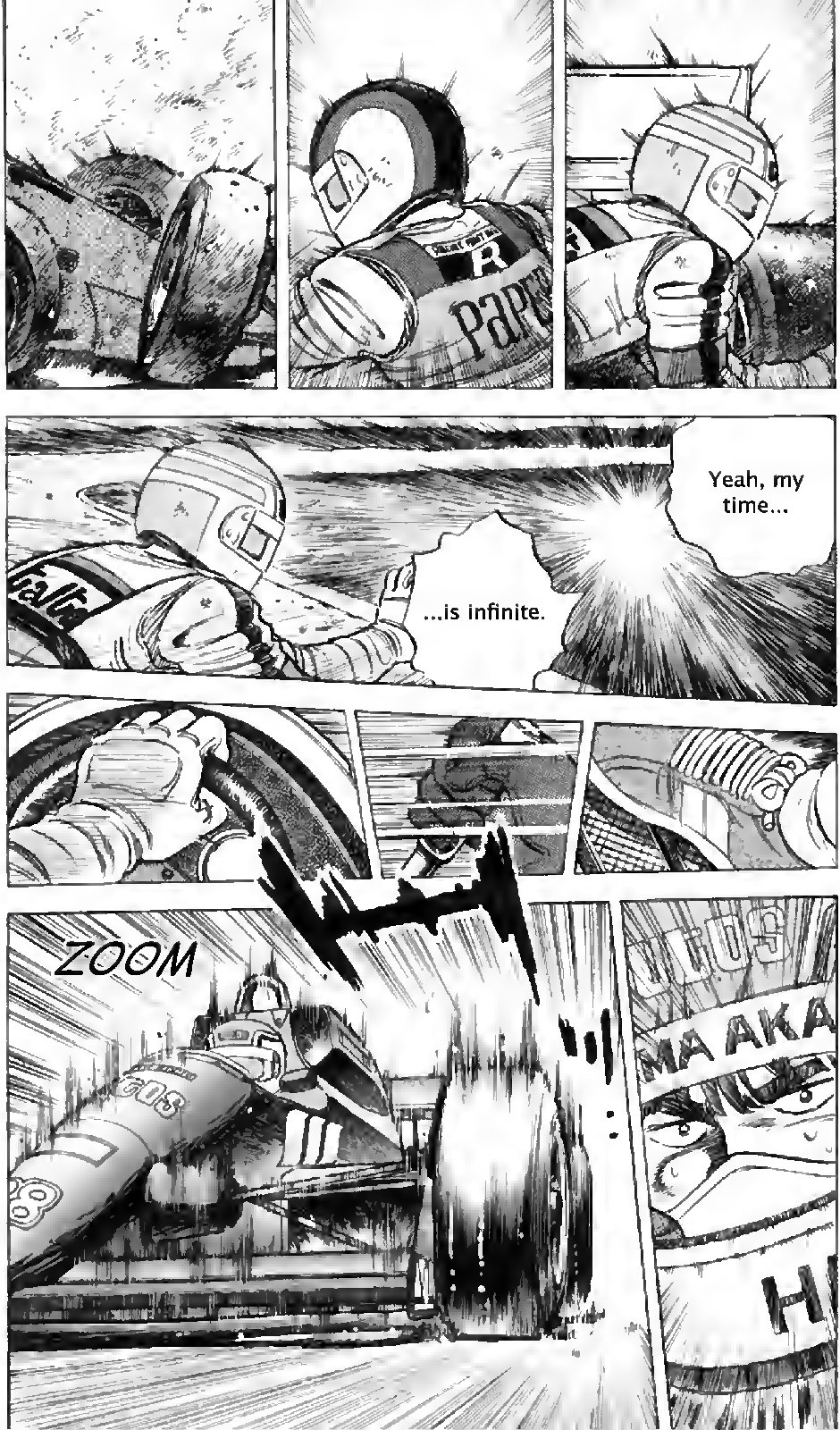
There he is! In front of two slower cars!
Found you, Otoya!
So I'll probably be seein' Otoya soon.
I'm in fourth ...
GUNMA
No no, he's gotta panic!
Otherwise it ain't a real race!
Don't panic, Gunma!
...you can make calm decisions in the midst of panic, chaos, and split-second situations.
Gunma, if you've really grown as a racer...
Damn you, Otoya!
I ain't gonna let you beat me!

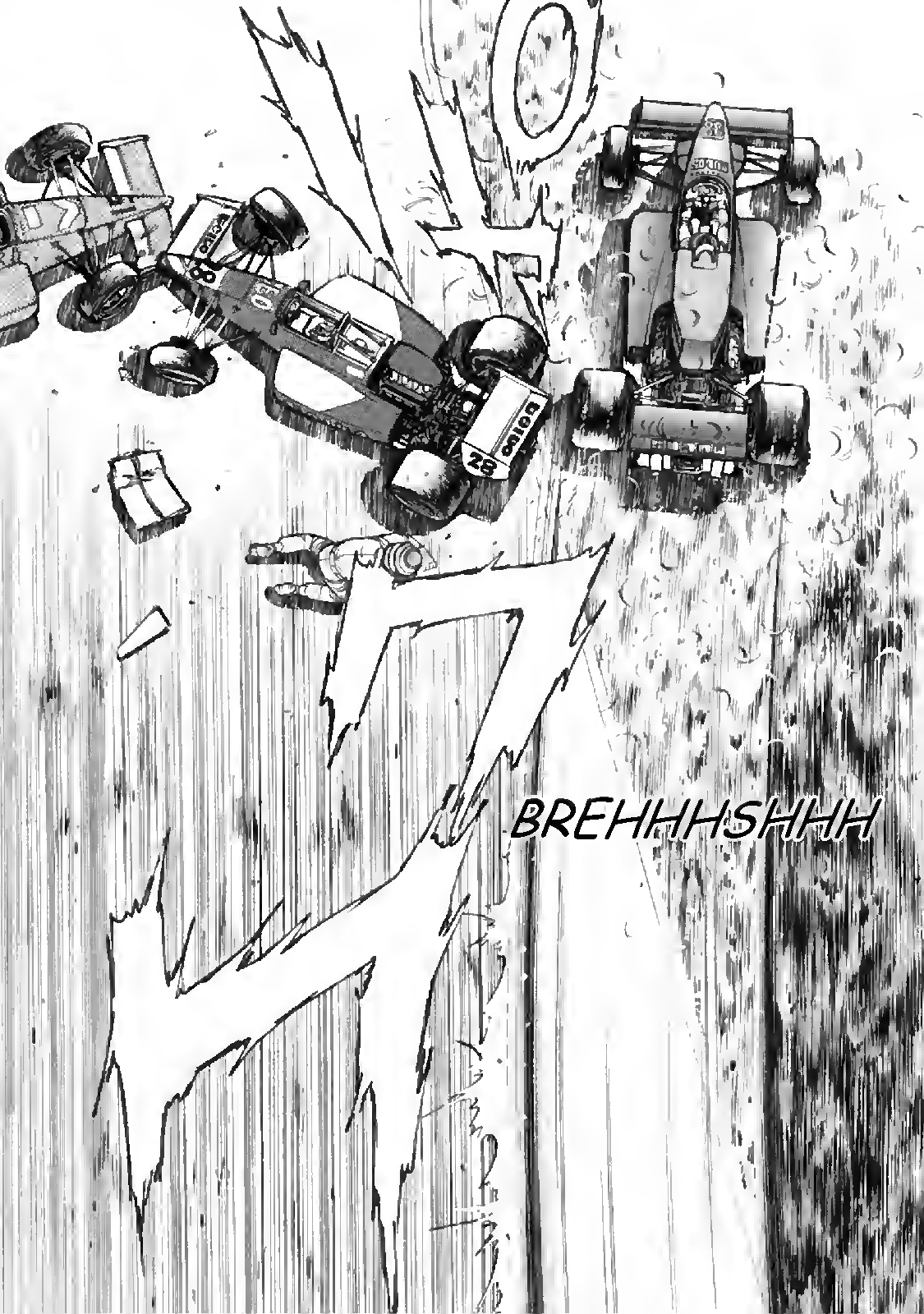

BAM
28
Two cars on earlier laps have collided!
SCREECH
15
They've completely blocked the course!

!!
Oh, hell!
GTO
ABUCHI
MA AKA
!!
Gunma's right behind them!
28
The Goddess of Victory is on my side!

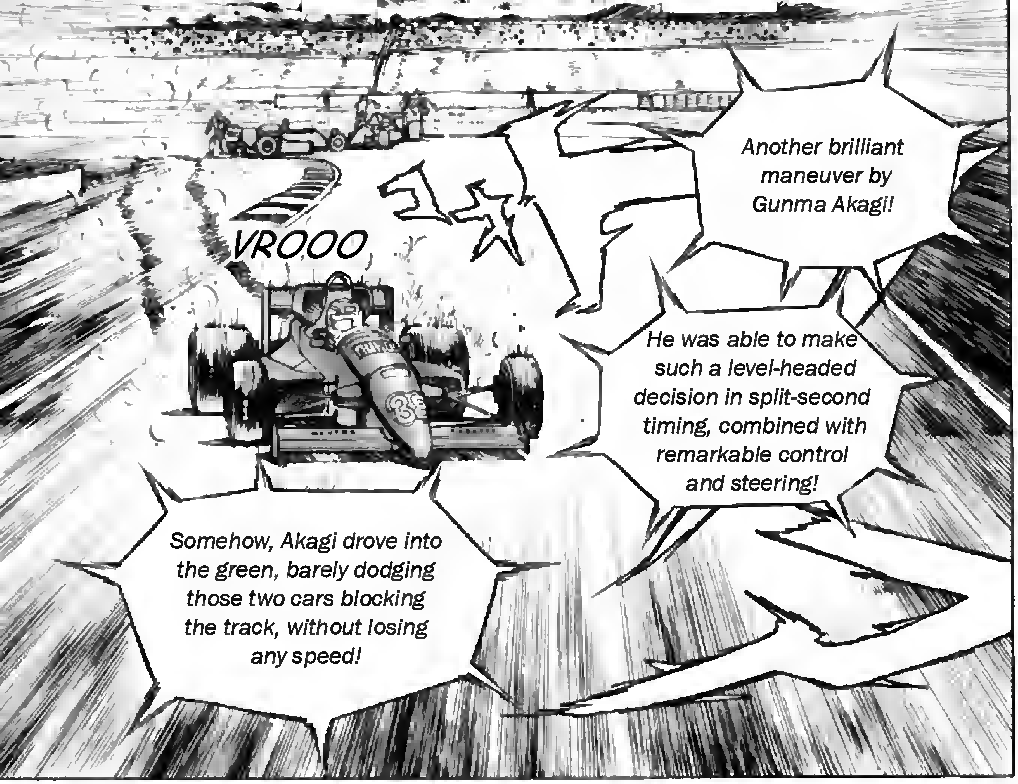

AKA
What a terrible dose of bad luck!
...got tenths of a second before I hit 'em...
I...
Now what!?

15
Chill out.
You're fine.
You still...
...got plenty of time!

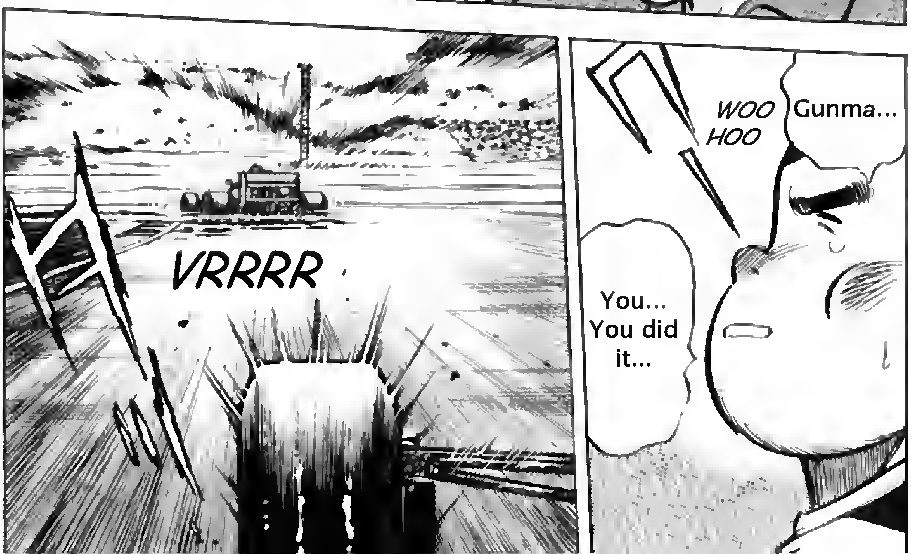

Yeah, my time...
...is infinite.
ZOOM

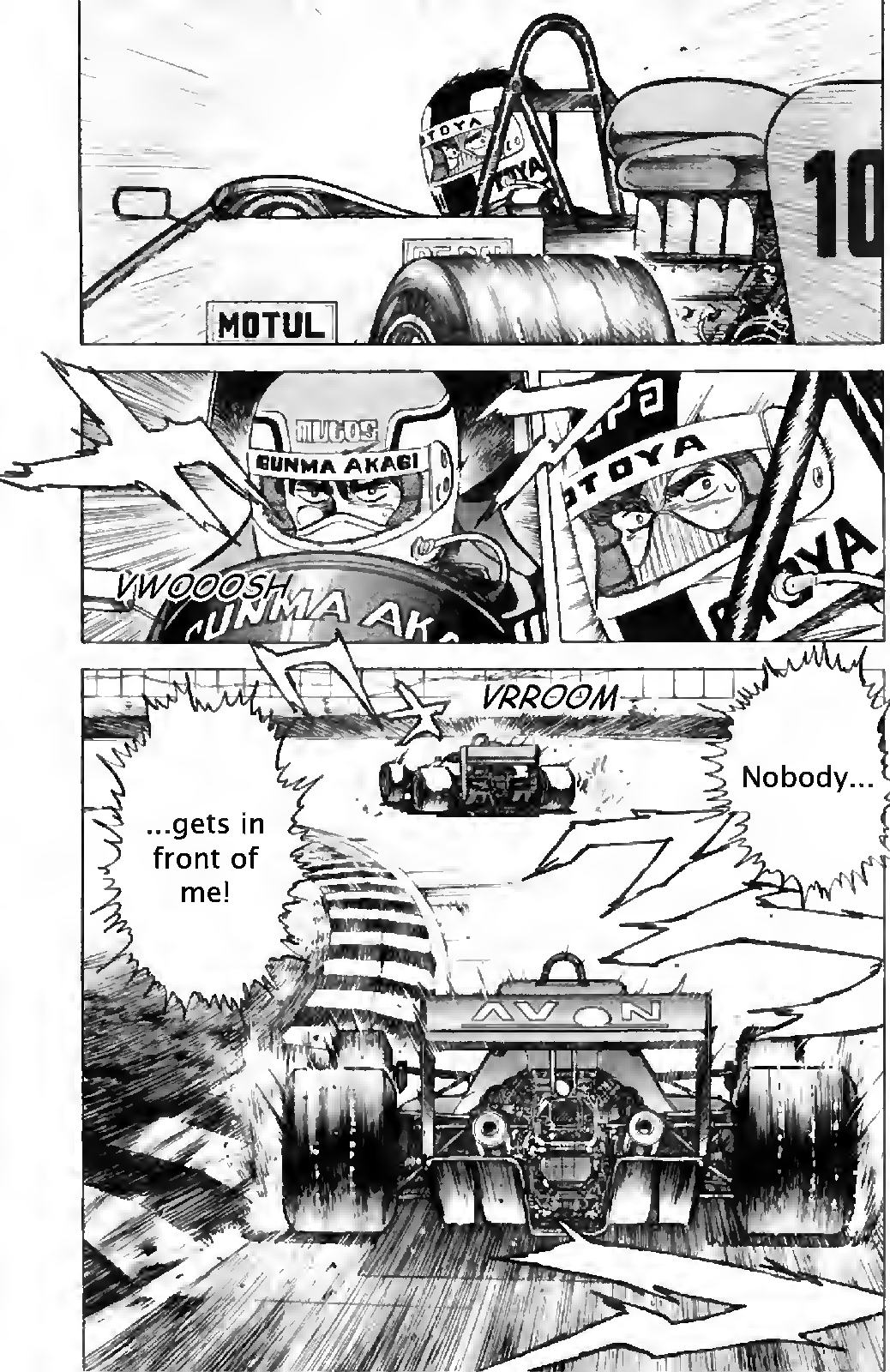

BREHHHSHHH

BREHHHHH
He...
...managed...
...to get...
...around...
...those cars!
SHOOOOH
AVON
AVON

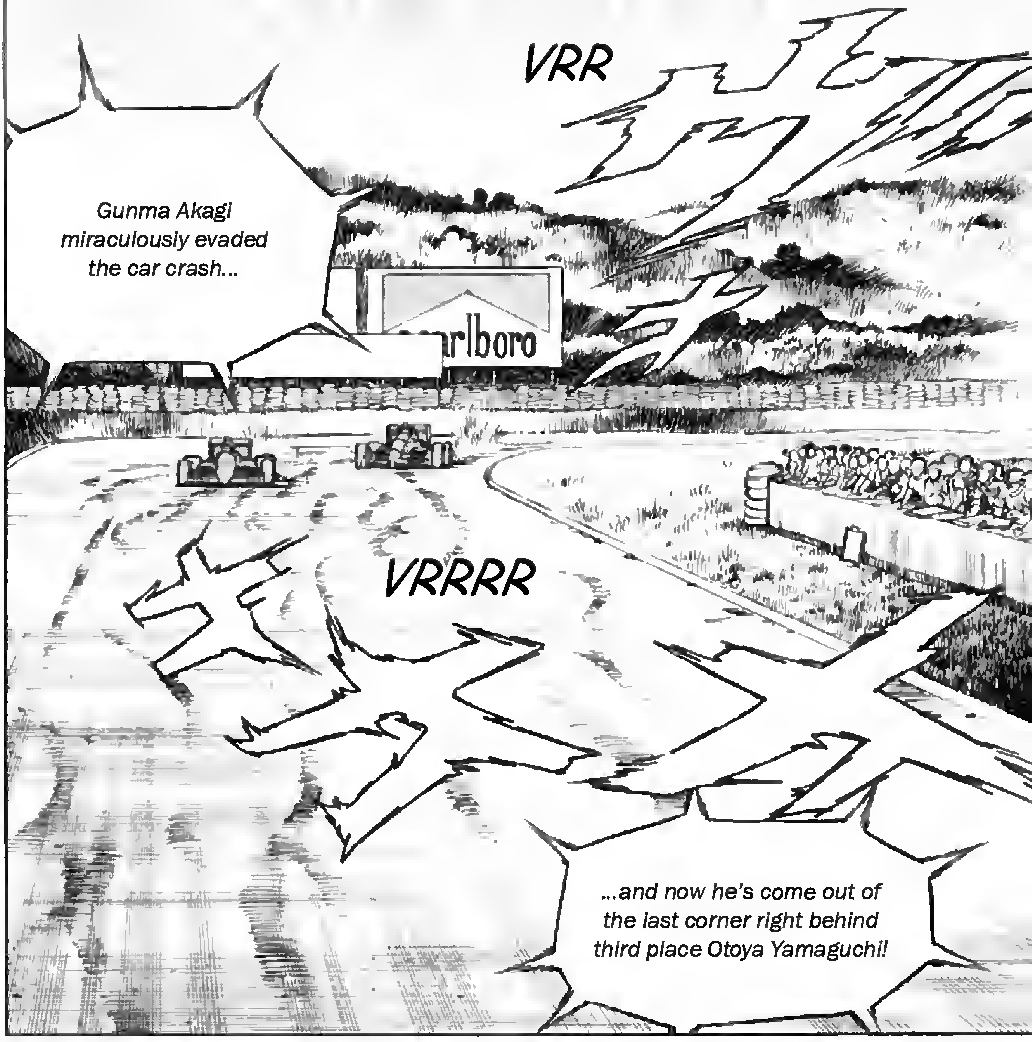

VROOO
Another brilliant maneuver by Gunma Akagi!
He was able to make such a level-headed decision in split-second timing, combined with remarkable control and steering!
Somehow, Akagi drove into the green, barely dodging those two cars blocking the track, without losing any speed!

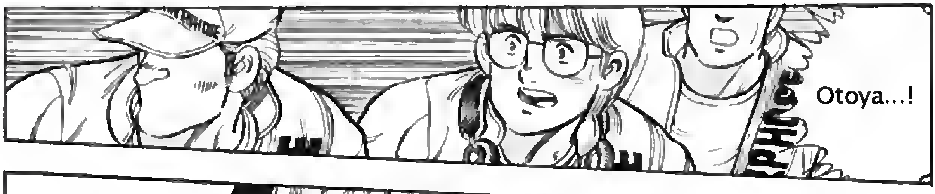
What a stunt.
Damn...


VRRRR
WOO HOO
Gunma...
You... You did it...

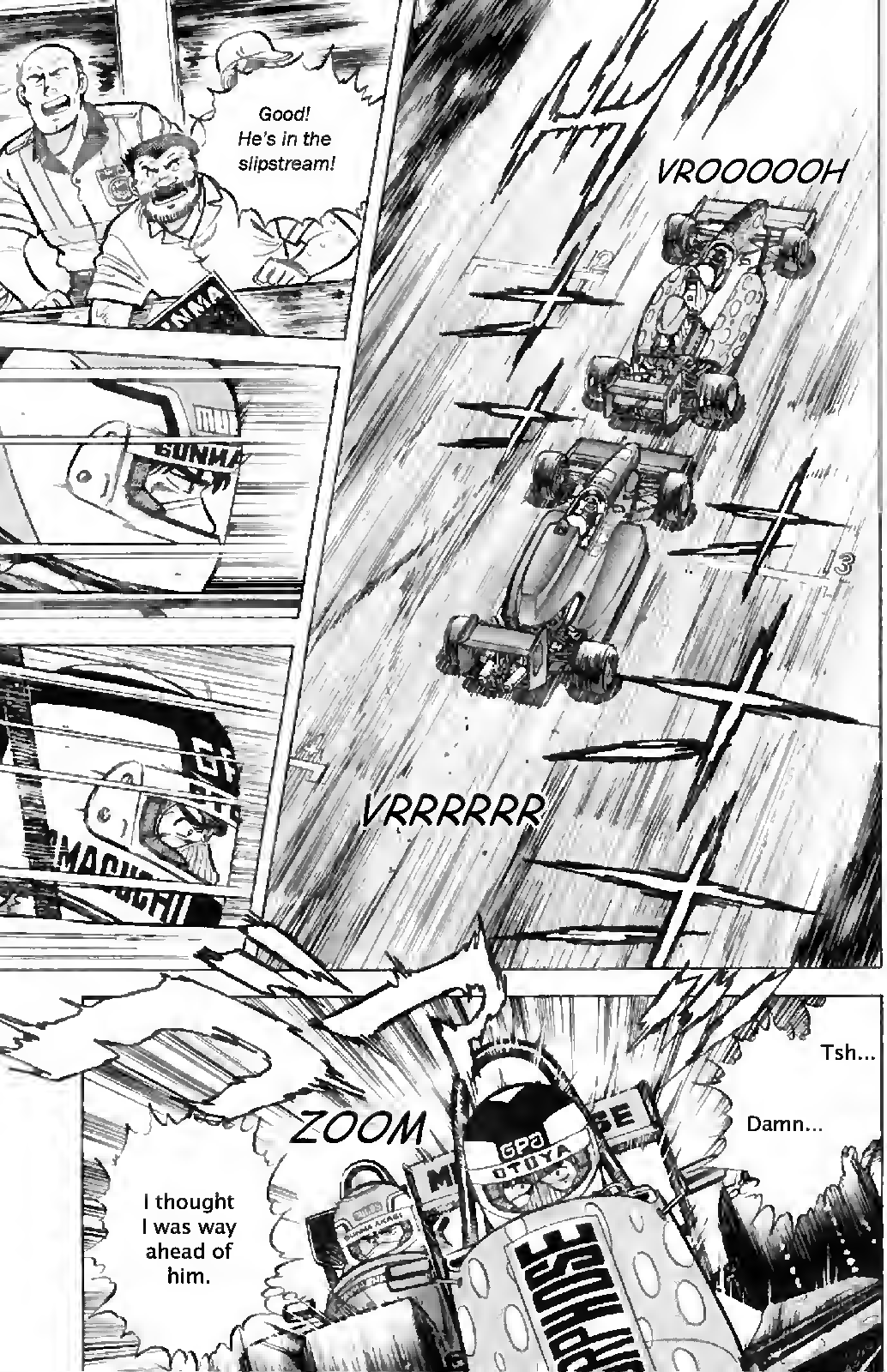

10
MOTUL
GUNMA AKAGI
VWOOOSH
VRROOM
Nobody...
...gets in front of me!
AVON

Chapter 8:
Betrayal

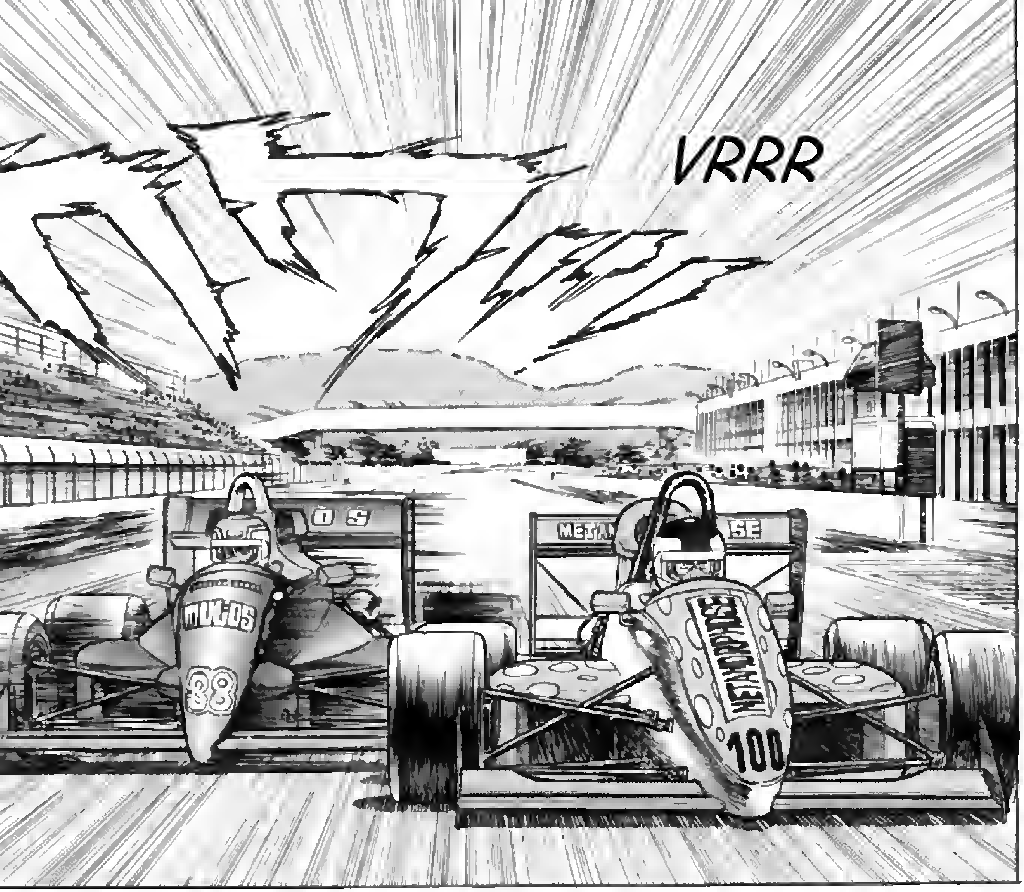

VRR
Gunma Akagi miraculously evaded the car crash...
VRRRR
...and now he's come out of the last corner right behind third place Otoya Yamaguchi!

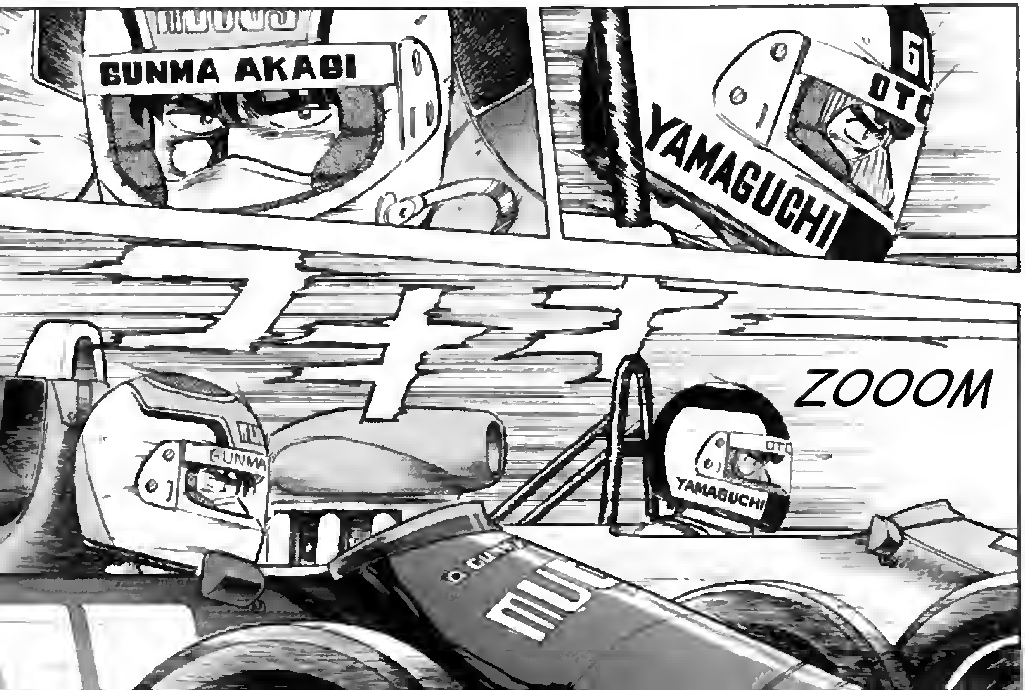

Otoya...!

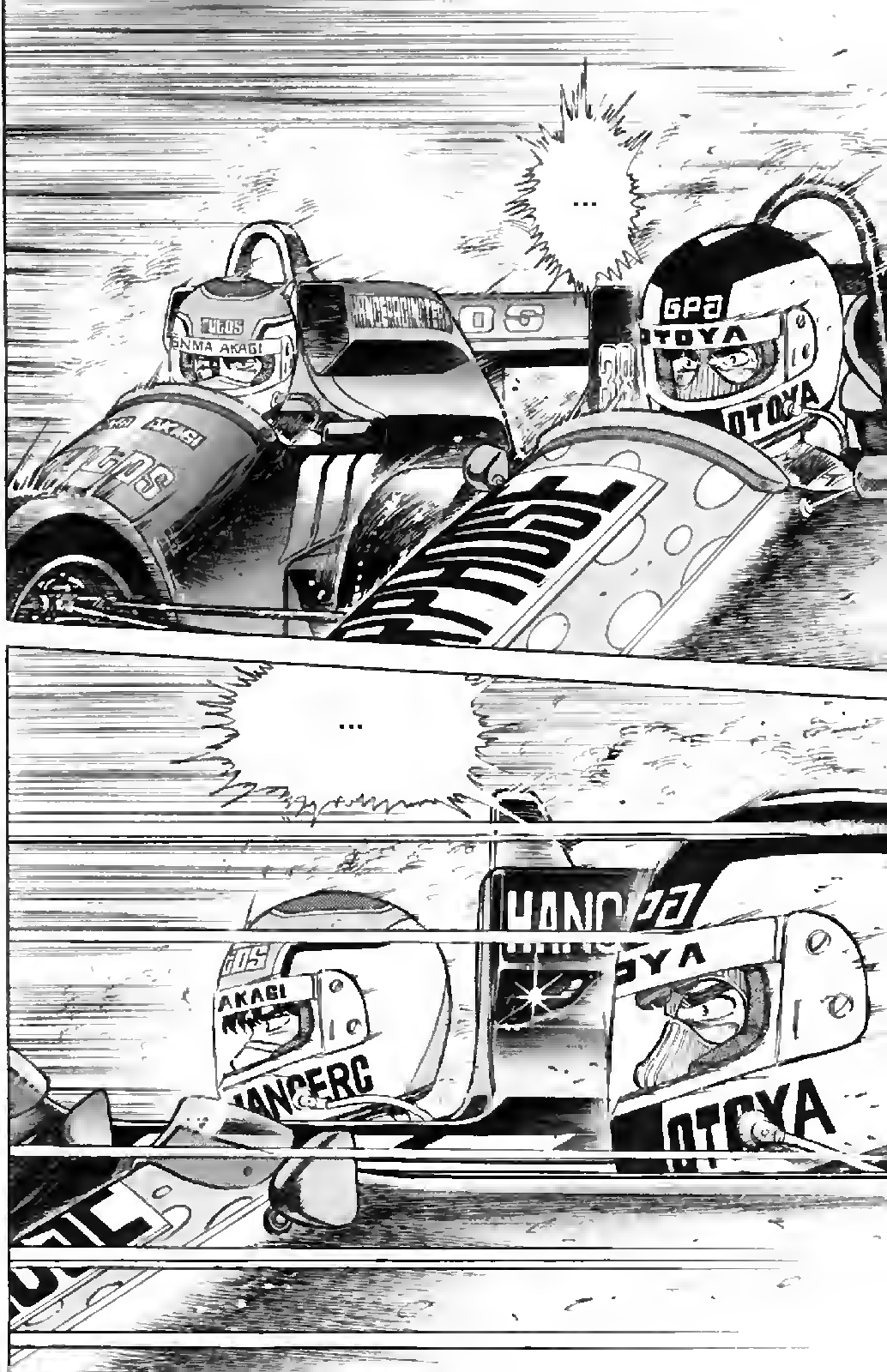
But now that Gunma's right on his tail, we don't have a chance.
The extent of our plan was to strike while Gunma gets his tires changed to get out in front...

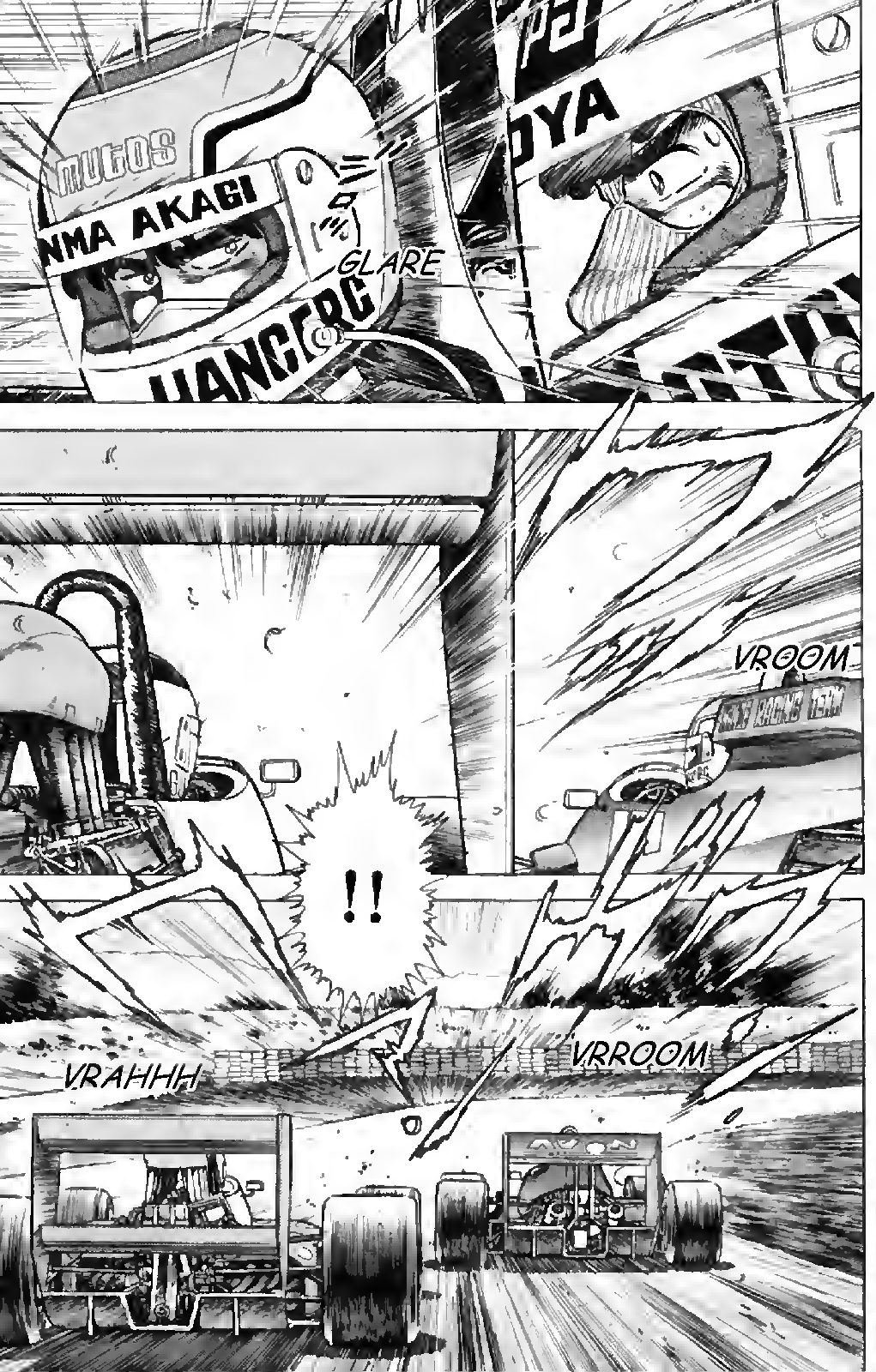

Good! He's in the slipstream!
VROOOOOH
VRRRRRR
ZOOM
I thought I was way ahead of him.
Tsh...
Damn...

...is right on my tail!
But that bas-tard...
The Goddess of Victory should still be on my side!
And that accident in front of him...
I followed the strategy perfectly.
OTOYA
How did he get there!?
ZOOM
Let's do this, Otoya!
AKAGI

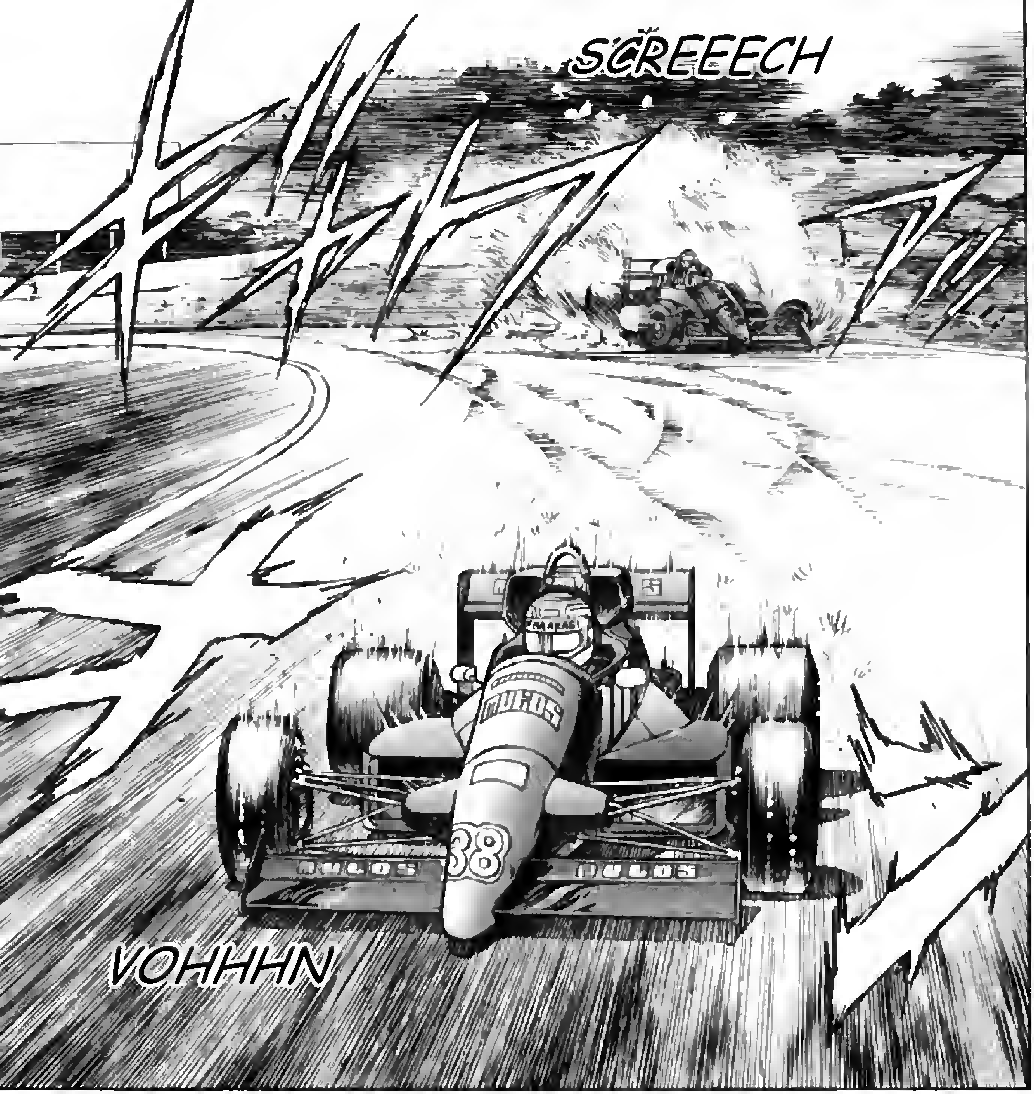

VRRR
MUGEN
100
38


GUNMA AKABI
YAMAGUCHI
ZOOOM
GUNMA
YAMAGUCHI


...
GPa
TOYA
TOYA
AKAGI
...
AKAGI
TOYA


NMA AKAGI
GLARE
PYA
VROOM
!!
VRAHHH
VRROOM

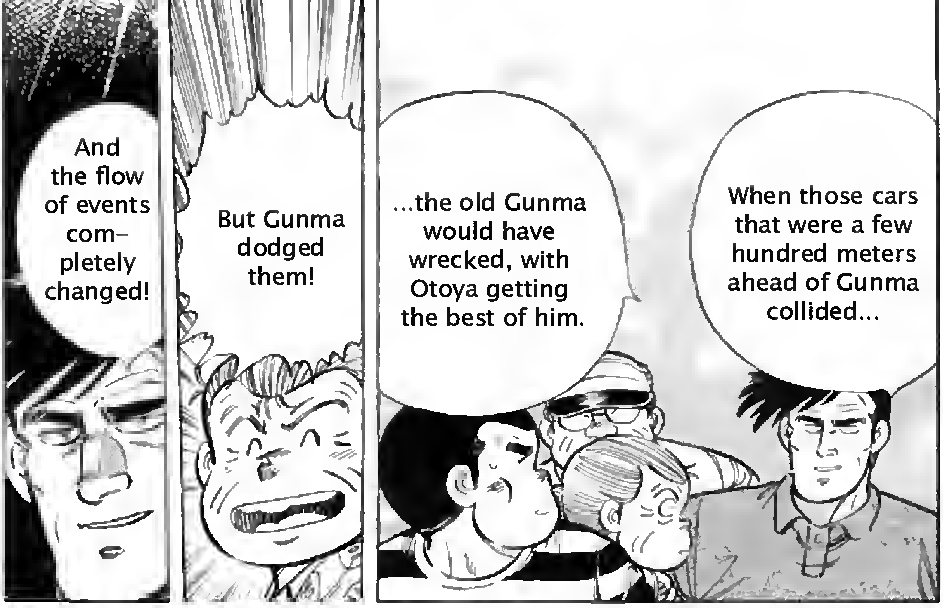
...like it was...
...
nothing
...
He...
...
passed
...
...
me
...
!?
SHOOM

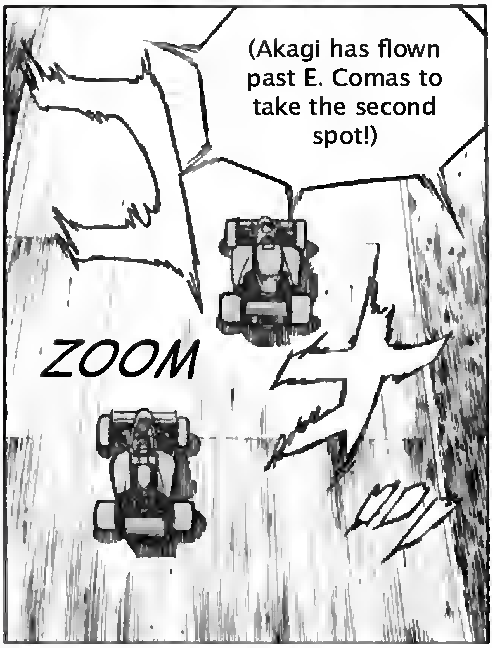

SCREEECH
VOHHHN

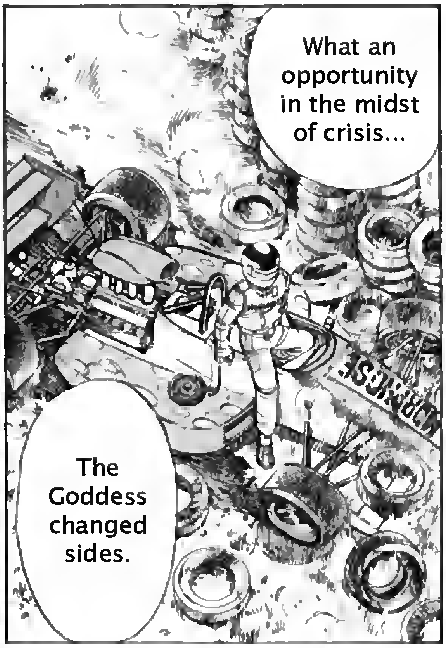
...
OTOYA

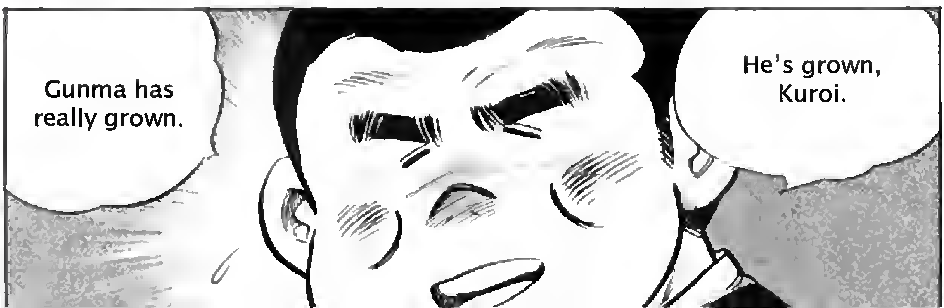
KAGI

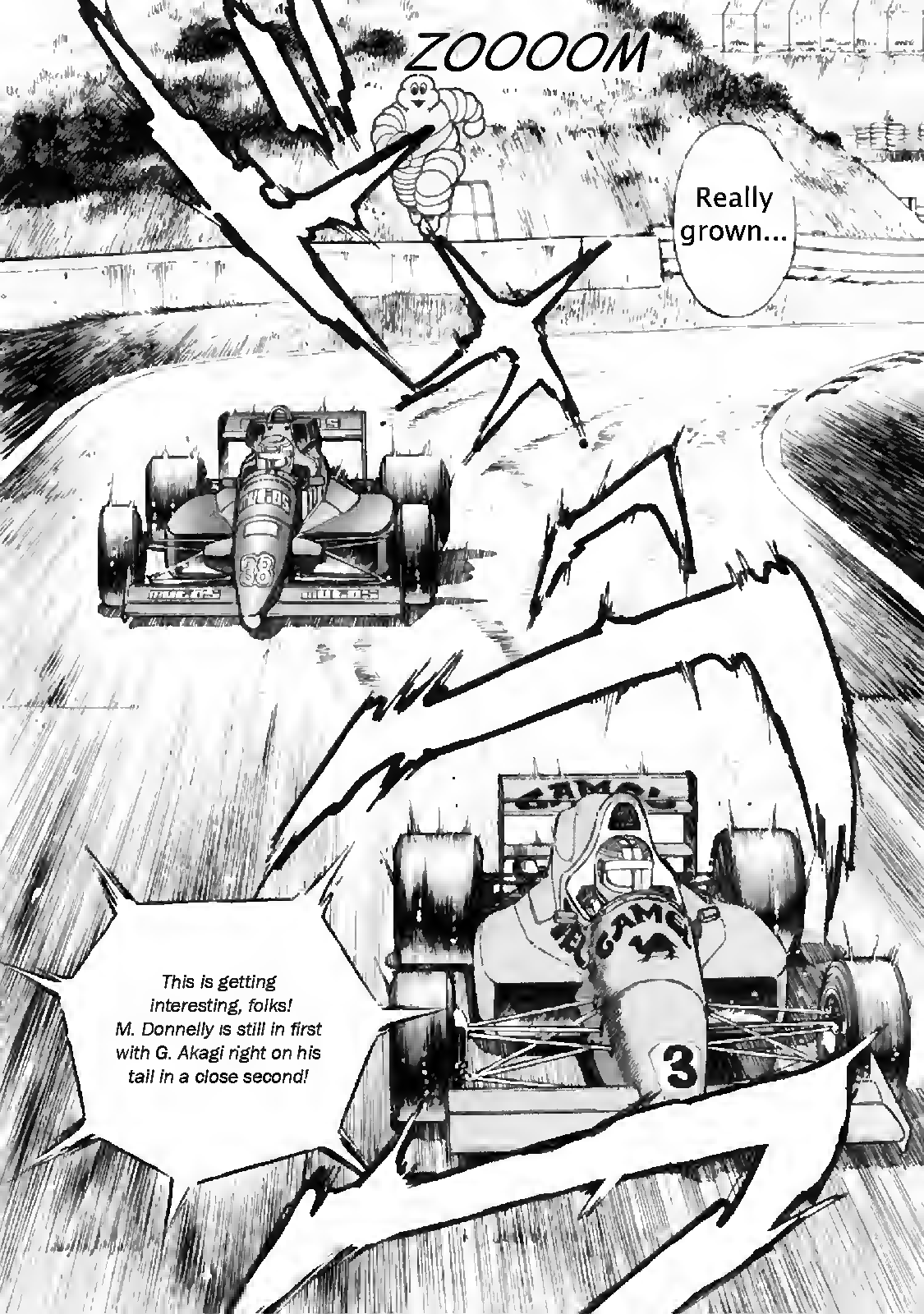
...
He beat me.
SCREEEEECRRRK
...
SLUMP
It's a strange thing.
...was certainly smiling on him at first.
Otoya's Goddess of Victory...
Just the way she always has.
...and crisis in opportu-nity.
There's opportunity in crisis...
Just like in baseball.


And the flow of events com-pletely changed!
But Gunma dodged them!
...the old Gunma would have wrecked, with Otoya getting the best of him.
When those cars that were a few hundred meters ahead of Gunma collided...


(Akagi has flown past E. Comas to take the second spot!)
ZOOM

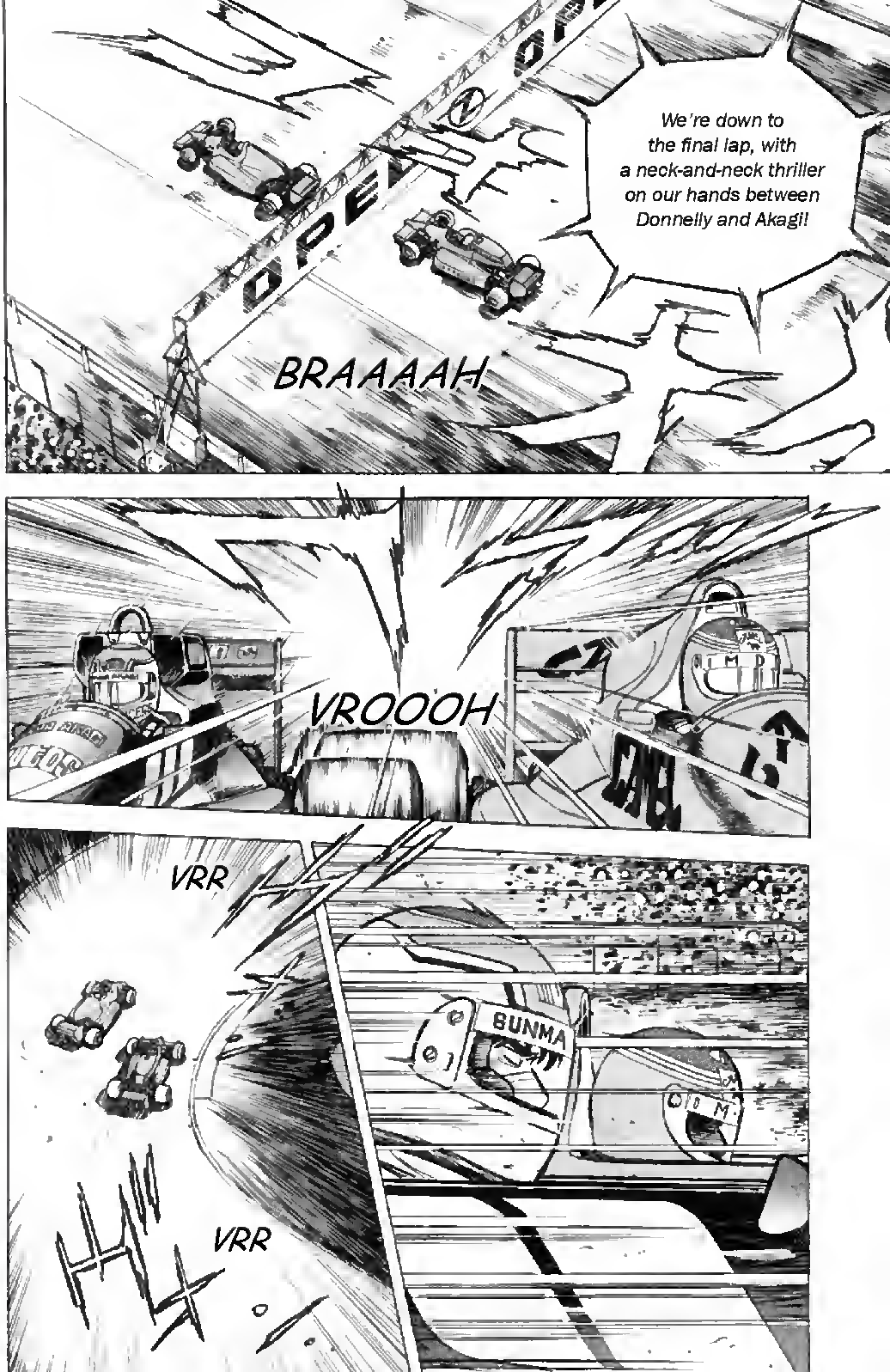

What an opportunity in the midst of crisis...
The Goddess changed sides.


Gunma has really grown.
He's grown, Kuroi.

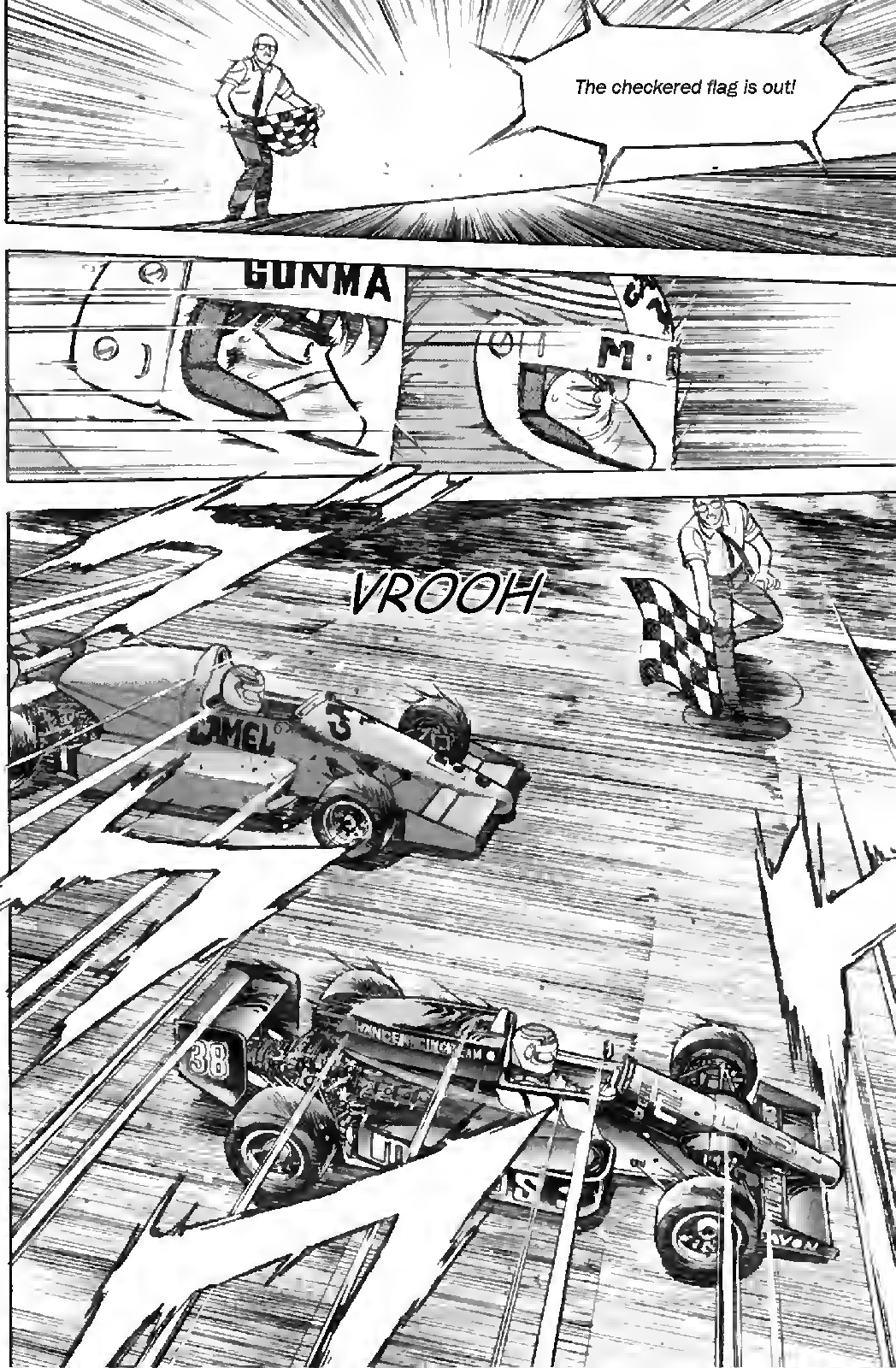

ZOOOOM
Really grown...
This is getting interesting, folks! M. Donnelly is still in first with G. Akagi right on his tail in a close second!
3

...gets in front of me!
Nobody...
MUGEN
GUNMA AKAGI
GUNMA AKAGI

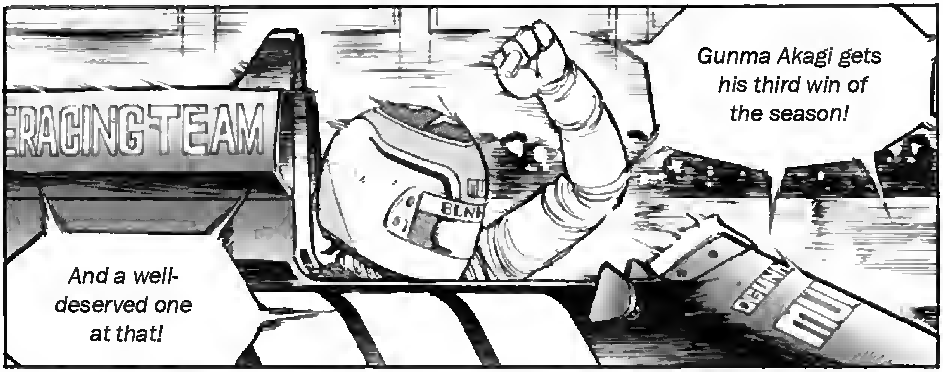
SHOOOOOM


We're down to the final lap, with a neck-and-neck thriller on our hands between Donnelly and Akagi!
BRAAAAH
VROOOH
VRR
BUNMA
VRR

The top two racers are about to enter the last corner!
Who will emerge victorious!?
BREHHH
GREHHH
CAMEL


The checkered flag is out!
GUNMA
VROOH
CAMEL
3
38

KURRRR
It's Akagi! Gunma Akagi just barely passes Donnelly for the win!


RACING TEAM
Gunma Akagi gets his third win of the season!
And a well-deserved one at that!

ZOOOOOM
...

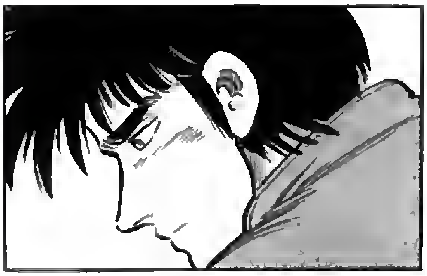
KACHUK
Sako!
I'm back!
Hey...
...?

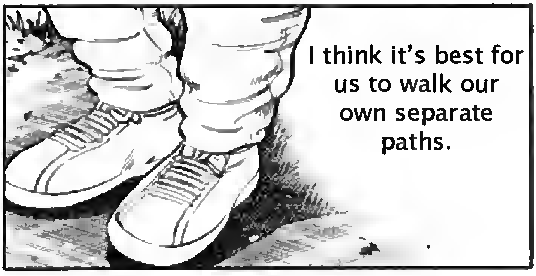
Chapter 9: Luck with Women

I can't give up my singing, and you can't abandon your racing.

I've decided to leave you.

Goodbye, Gunma.





I think it's best for us to walk our own separate paths.

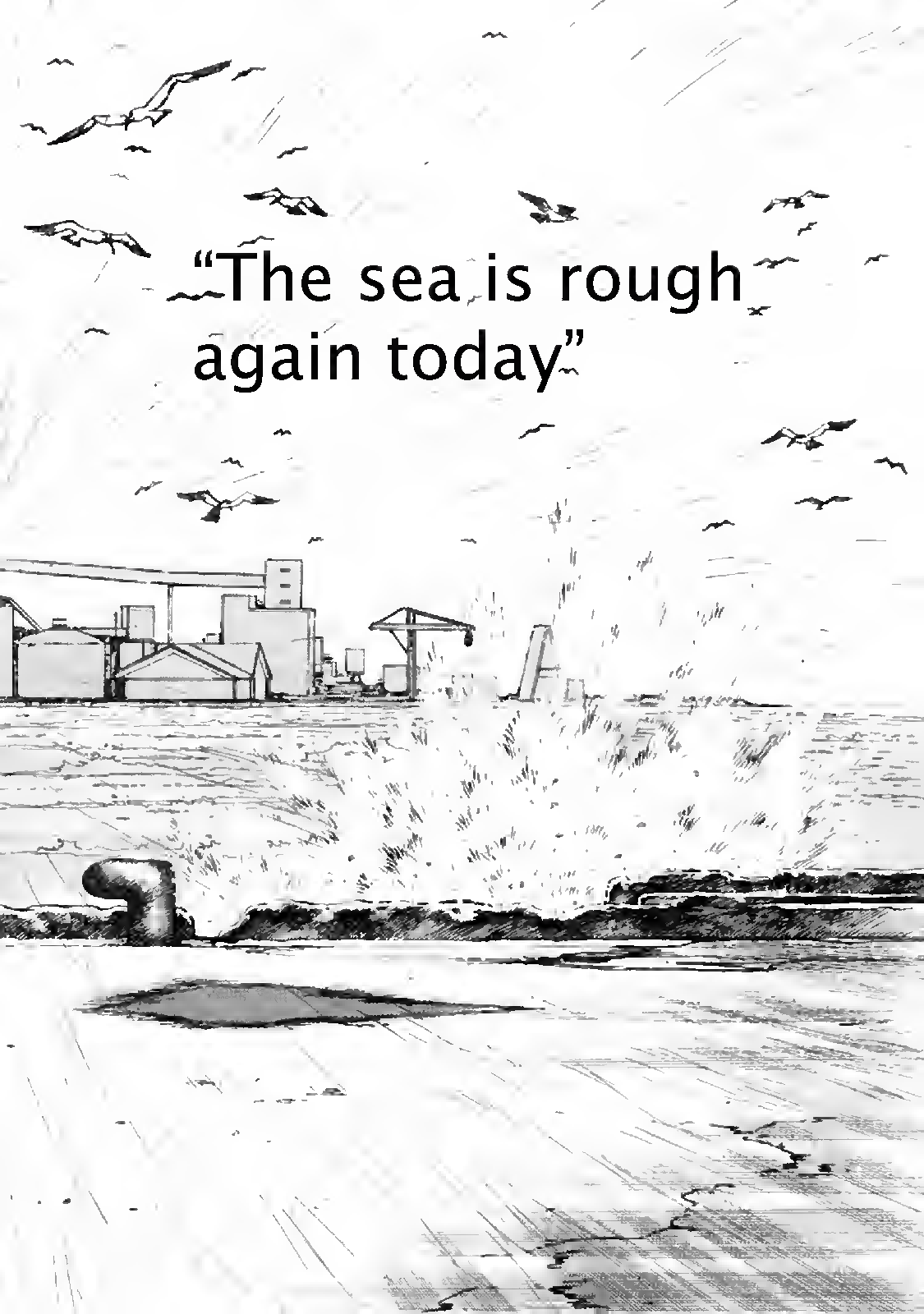
This is our final decision.

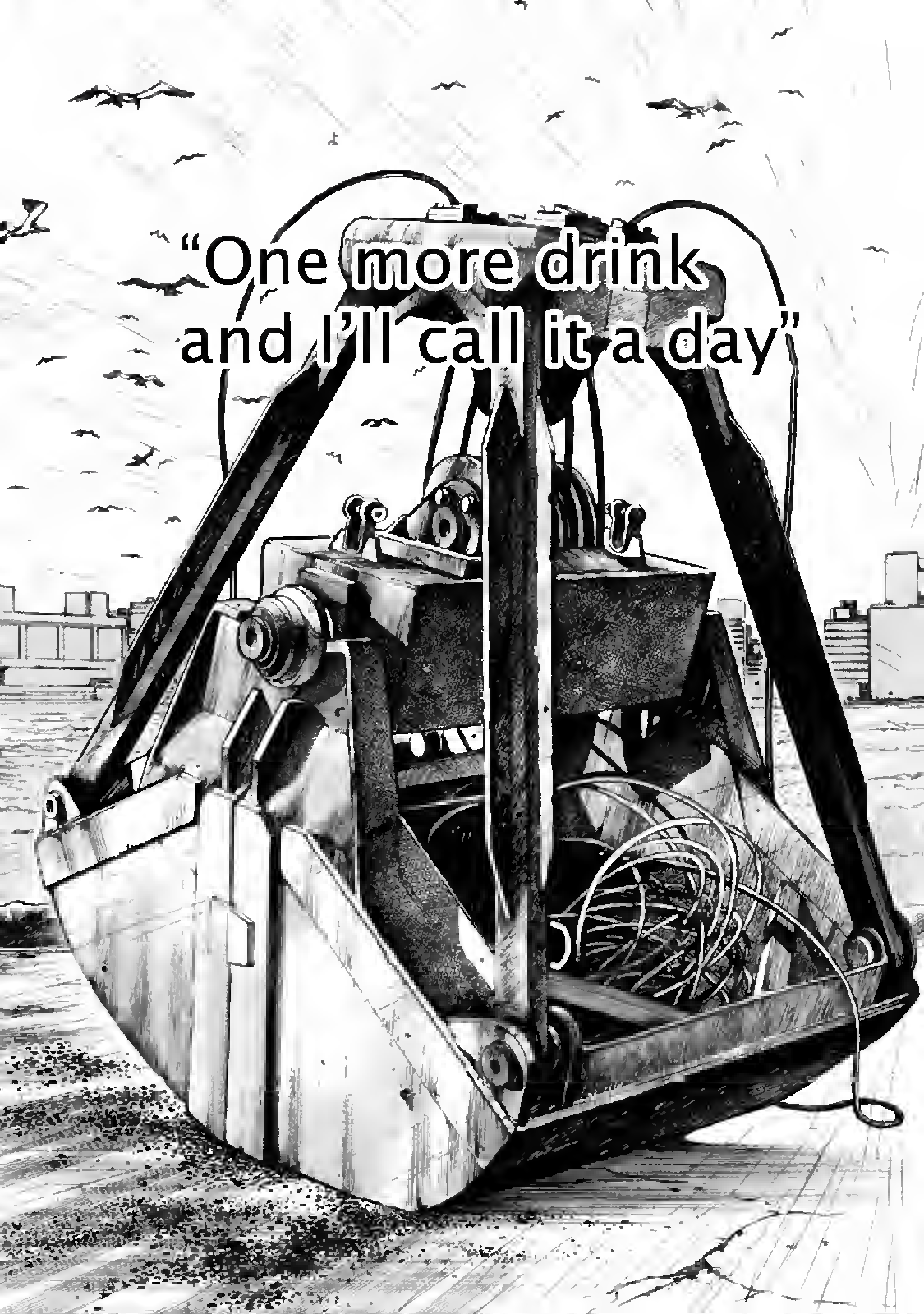
Those are memories that Peabow and I will never forget. I will cherish them forever.

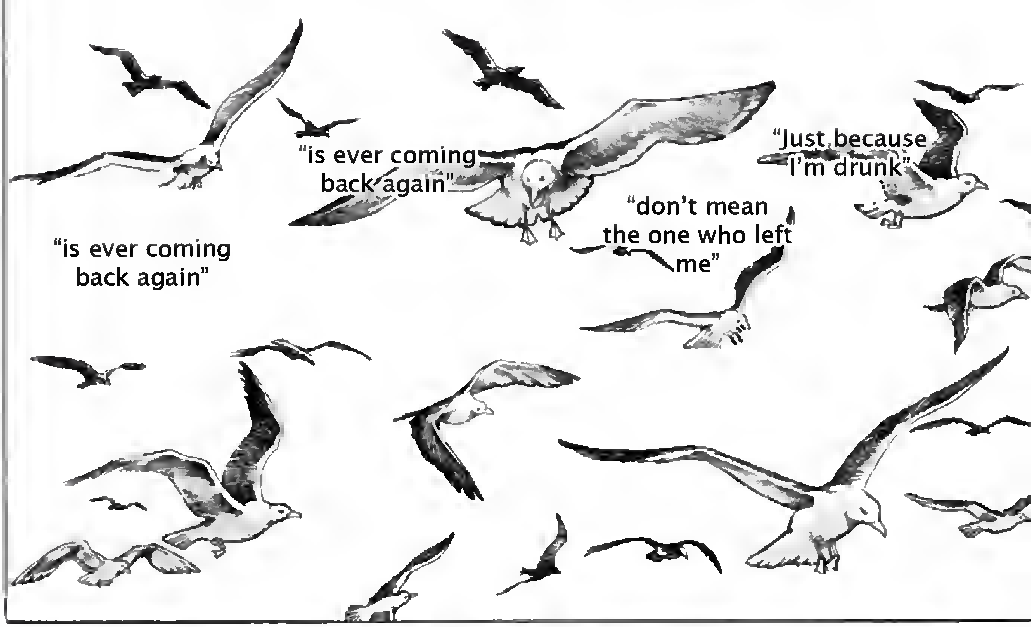
I love you, Gunma. The joy, the courage, and the dreams you filled me with during our best days together...

Hm.
KRSH
Final...
CRUMPLE
...deci-sion.
I think maybe...
Hey, Tamotsu...
...with women.
...I got bad luck...
FWOOH

"One more drink and I'll call it a day"
"The sea is rough again today"


"The sea is rough
again today"


“One more drink
and I’ll call it a day”


"is ever coming back again"
"Just because I'm drunk"
"don't mean the one who left me"
"is ever coming back again"

"They said we'll be together"
"Those Tarot cards were lying"

"has been bad since long ago, bad since long ago"
"But my luck with women"

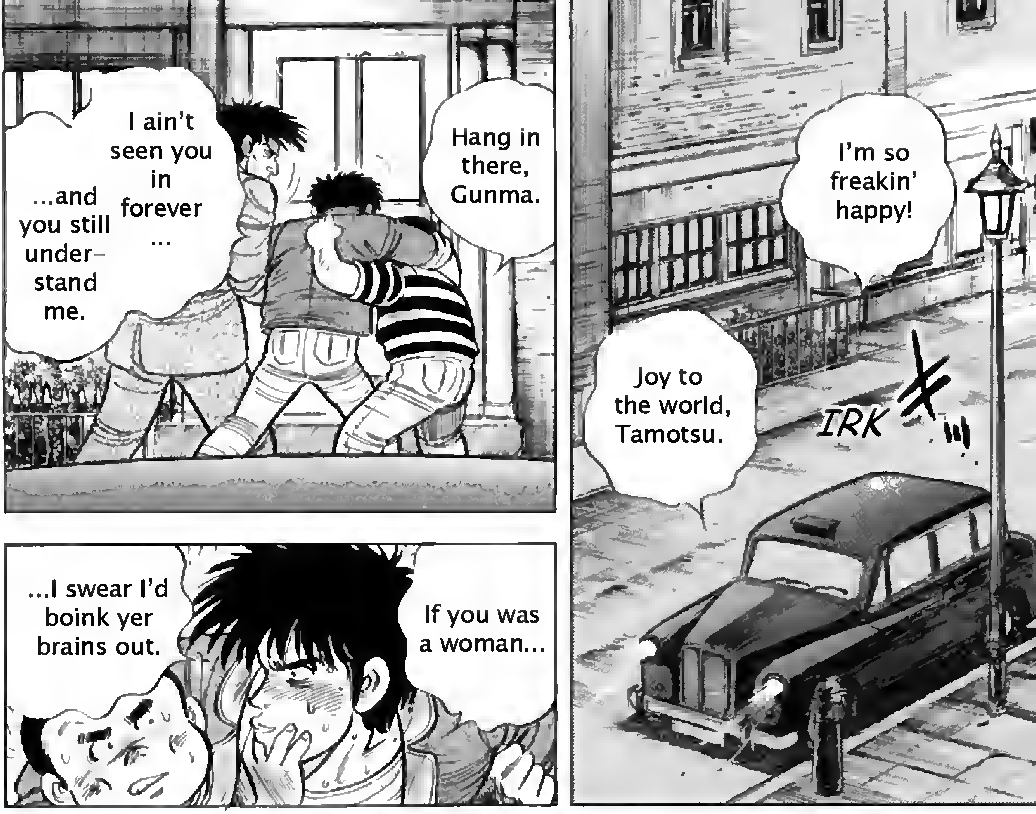
GLUC
GLUC
You've had enough.
Come on, Gunma...
Can you believe this guy?
So I gotta get drunk.
HA HA HA
...from Japan just to see me.
Hell no. You all came here...
You were great.
Yeah, I did.
Did you see me drivin' out there!?
Hey Tamotsu!
It's hard to explain.
I guess, you seemed more... at peace.
And what was so great about it?
Heh!

Like you were able to race outside of time, or somethin'.
That's how it looked to me.
You little genius!
I knew you were smart!
Bam! You nailed it!
SLAP
When those cars on earlier laps crashed, they blocked off my path.
And that's when I says to myself...
"Calm down, Gunma. You got all the time in the world."
You know?
...
I see.
You only had tenths of a second to react...
...but felt as if you had infinite time.

Yup, all the time in the world.
It's an infinite hell...
I'm thinkin' that...
...maybe Yuki felt the same way.

Heh heh heh...
But I gotta live in that same infinite hell for the rest of my life. Heh heh...
Maybe it came to me as some sort of punish-ment for that...

Come on, you're drunk.
An infinite hell without Sako!
SMASH


I ain't seen you in forever ...
...and you still under-stand me.
Hang in there, Gunma.
I'm so freakin' happy!
Joy to the world, Tamotsu.
IRK
...I swear I'd boink yer brains out.
If you was a woman...
He's going through some rough stuff.
Sigh ...
Cut it out, Gunma. That's nasty.
NNN...
NNN...

You and the others go back to the hotel. I'm a little worried, so I'll stay here tonight.
Oh, right...
So, what are you gonna do?
Hm?
...
Not tonight, I'm talking about your future.
Gunma needs you.
Stay here in England.
F1 is our dream.
Mr. Kuroi!
...you need him!
And Tamotsu ...

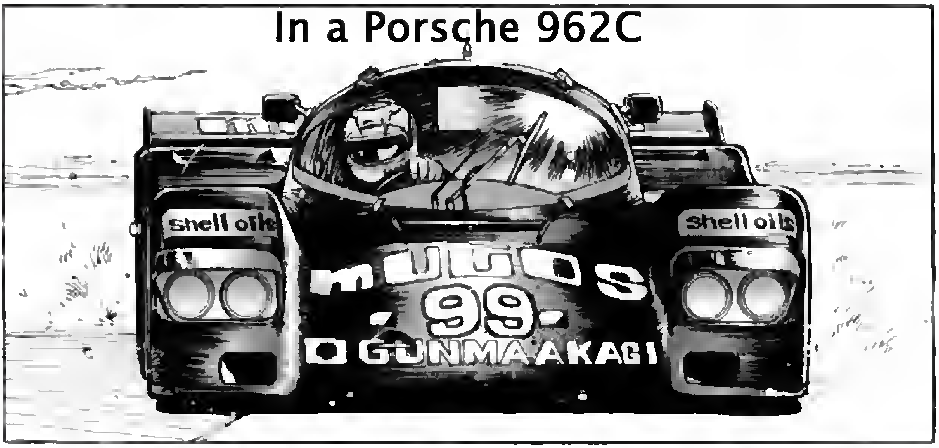
...and you...
Not only to Gunma ...
...but also for me and Yasu.
BRITISH AIRWAY
That's why he passed you up.
We should've had you change tires.
It was just a bad strategy.
You raced well overall.

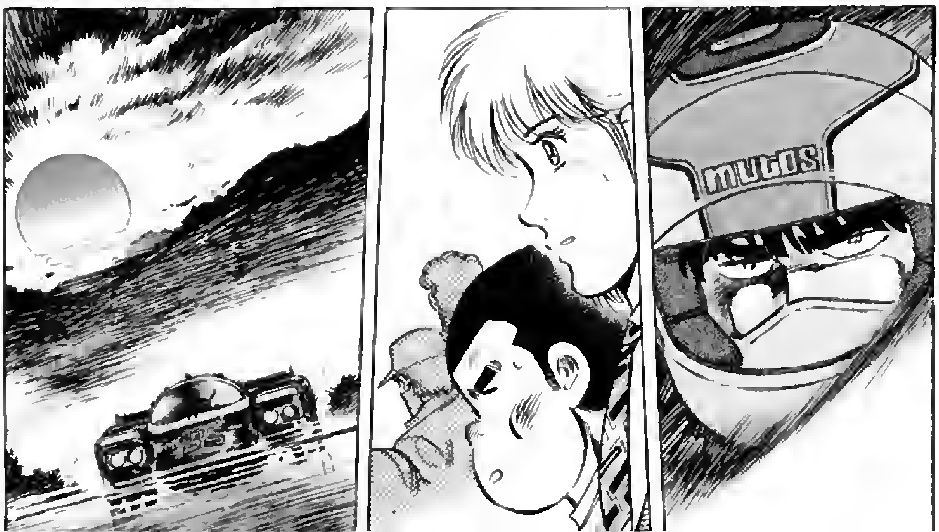
...?
...
Come on, don't beat yourself up over this. The fight has just begun.
How?
How could I have been so stupid?
What?
I'm a fool.
Talkin' about the Goddess and luck and all that garbage...
...and I got such a big head in the process.
I ain't got what it takes, but I was so arrogant.
VEEEEEW
What's gotten into you?
The world is a helluva lot bigger than I thought.
Take a good look, Yuma.
...

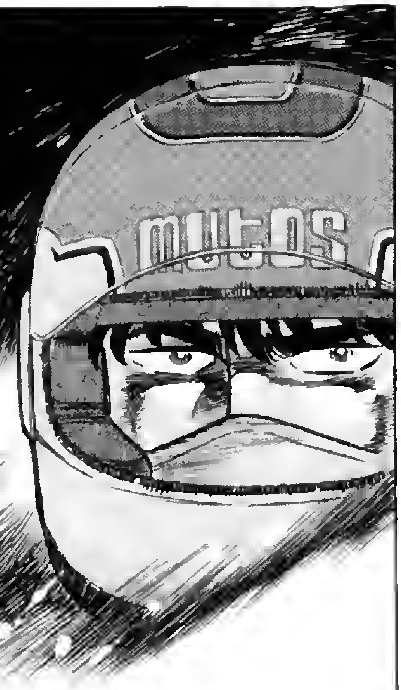
ゴォォ――――……ー‥‥オ‥
VEEEEEEEEEEEH

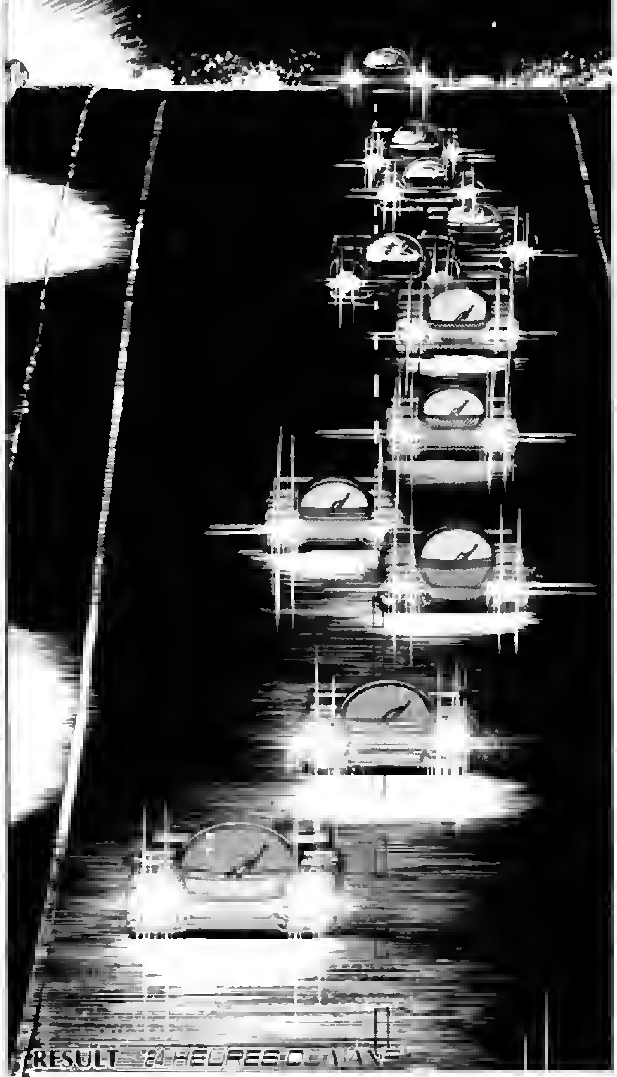
You'll never beat me with Otoya.
...
It's over-whelm-ing.
Look at it.
...he's about to change.
Maybe...
It sure is.
PAT

Japanese Sensation
Gunma Akagi
to race 24
Heures du Mans!


In a Porsche 962C
Shell oils
Shell oils
MUGEN
99
GUNMA AKAGI


MUGEN





RESULT 24 HEURES DU MANS

13 535 km laps over 24 hours
Preliminary 60 cars Final 55 cars Completion 20 cars

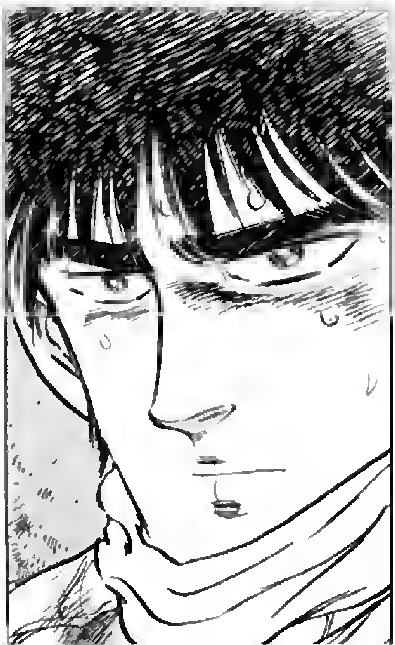
1	No 63	J Mass / M Reuter / S Dickens	Sauber C9/88 Mercedes
2	No 61	M Baldi / K Acheson / G Brancatelli	Sauber C9/88 Mercedes
3	No 9	HJ Stuck / B Wollek	Porsche 962C
4	No 1	J Lammers / P Tambay / A Gilbert-Scott	Jaguar XJR9LM
5	No 62	JL Schlesser / JP Jabouille / A Cudini	Sauber C9/88 Mercedes
6	No 8	H Pescarolo / C Ballot-Lena / J-L Ricci	Porsche 962C
7	No 281	C Hodgetts / D Kennedy / P Dieudonné	Mazda 767B
8	No 99	D Louis / G Akagi / Y Saarinen	Porsche 962C Mutos
9	No 4	A Ferté / M Ferte / E Salazar	Jaguar XJR9LM
10	No 202	T Yorino / H Regout / E Forbes-Robinson	Mazda 767B
11	No 16	H Huysman / D Lacaud / U Schäfer	Porsche 962C
12	No 18	B Redman / M Roe / C Los	Aston Martin AMR1
13	No 203	Y Terada / M Duez / V Weidler	Mazda 767
14	No 55	V Schuppan / F Figh / Ga Brabham	Porsche 962C
15	No 113	JC Andruet / P Farjon / S Kasuya	Cougar C20B Porsche
16	No 20	T Lee-Davey / T Dodd-Noble / K Iketani	Porsche 962C
17	No 171	D Shead / R Stirling / R Hyett	Spice SE88C, Ford DFL
18	No 108	P de Henning / D Wood / E Clements	Spice SE87C, Ford DFL
19	No 126	T Lecerf / P F Reusselot / J Messaoudi	Argo JM19C, Ford DLF
20	No 104	J Grand / R Pochauvin / J L Roy	Spice SF89C Ford DFL
	No 14	D Bell / J Weaver / T Needell	Porsche 962
	No 10	K Takahashi / B Giacomelli / G Lavaggi	Porsche 962C
	No 25	Ge Brabham / C Robinson / A Luyendyk	Nissan R89C
	No 101	L Taverna / N Adams / F Velez	Spice SE88C Ford DFL
	No 57	O Larrauri / J Pareja / W Brun	Porsche 962 GTI
	No 21	R Belm / L St James / G Spice	Spice SE89C Ford DFZ
	No 15	S Andskär / D Hobbs / D Hill	Porsche 962 GTI
	No 32	T Wada / A Morimoto / A Olofssen	March 88S Nissan
	No 2	J Nielsen / A Wallace / P Cobb	Jaguar XJR 9LM
	No 106	"Stingbrace" / V Venuta / R Smith	Tiga GC28B Ford DFL
	No 34	J Almeras / J M Almeras / A Ianetta	Porsche 962C
	No 12	P Gonin / B de Dryver / B Santal	Cougar C22LM Porsche

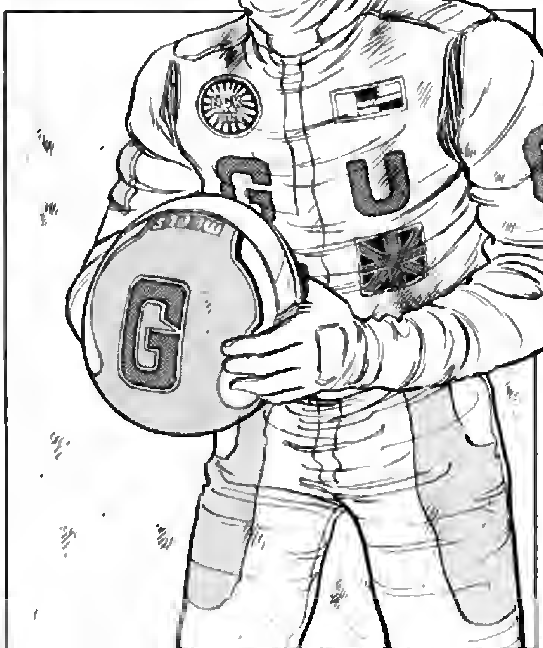
HRC's Gunma Akagi grabs 2nd place at the Enna-Pergusa F3000

Still king of the hill in total points

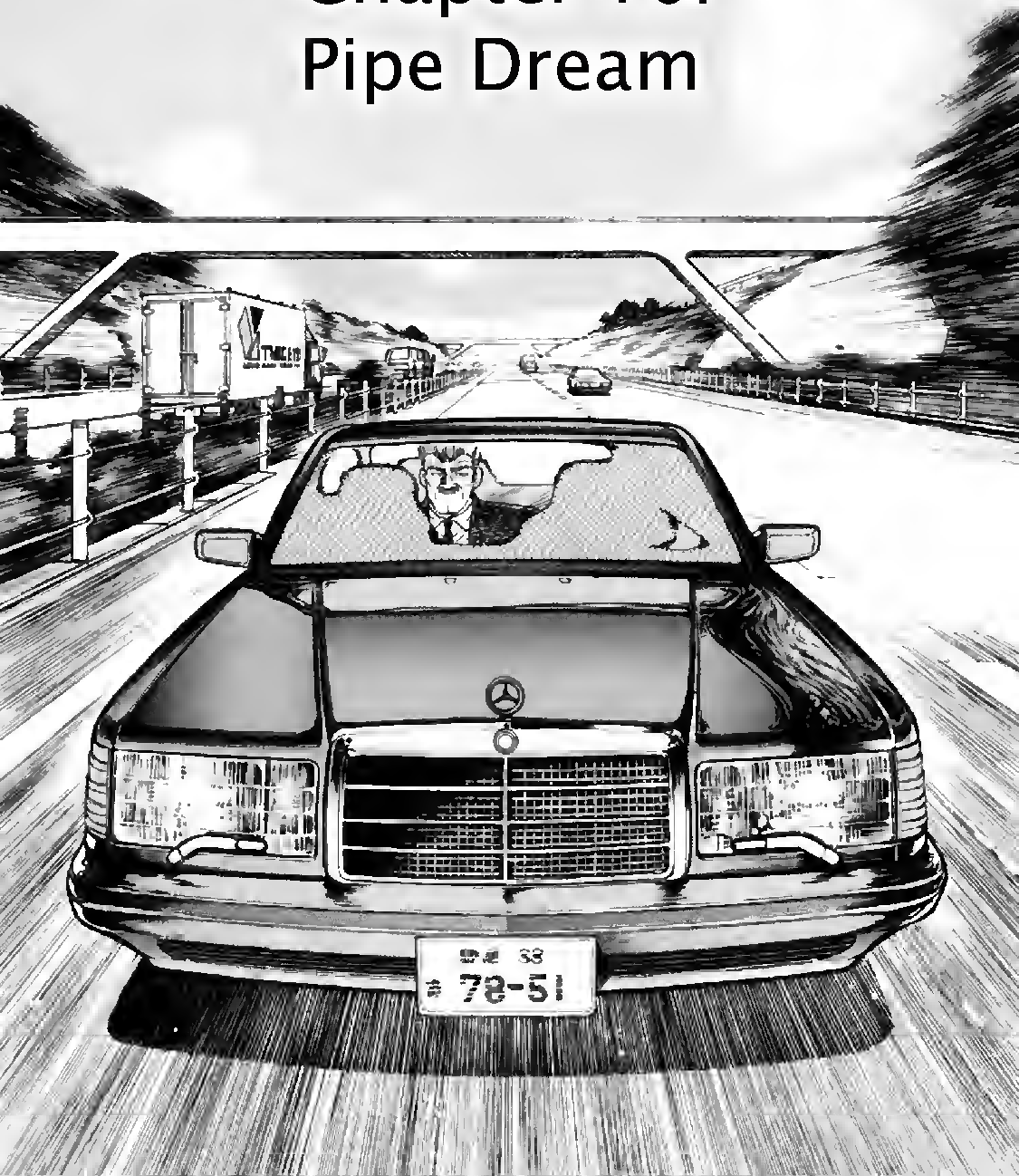
Akagi dominates at European F3000!

F1 already inevitable!



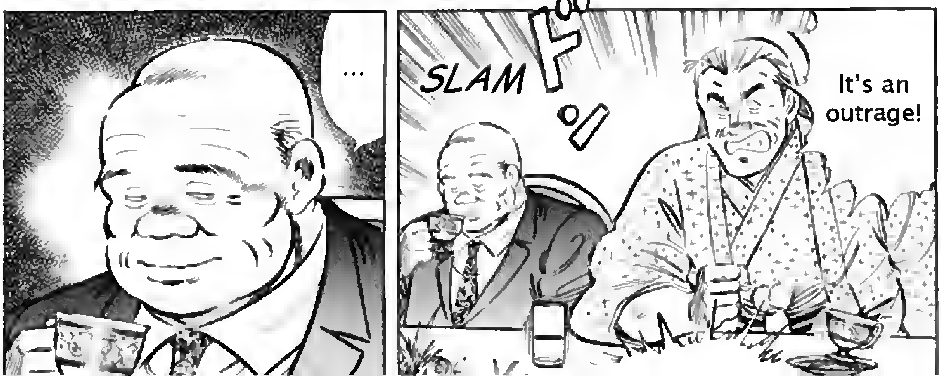


Chapter 10:
Pipe Dream

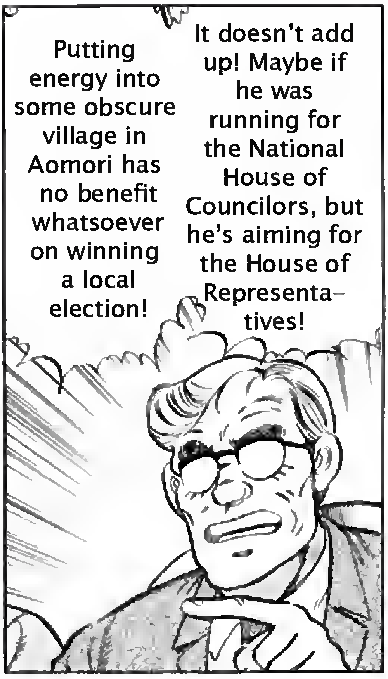


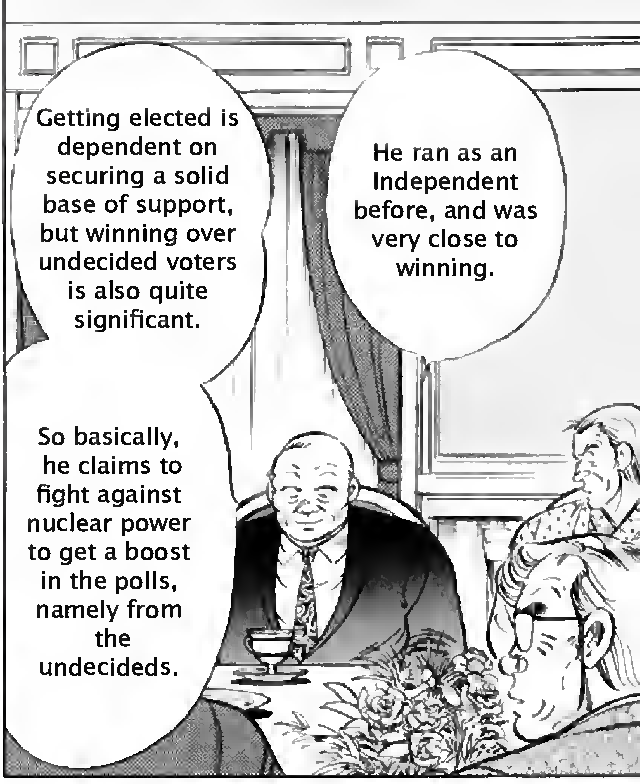
He's in Aomori looking over the property as we speak.
This is terrible.
Where's Soichiro?
He must be getting senile!

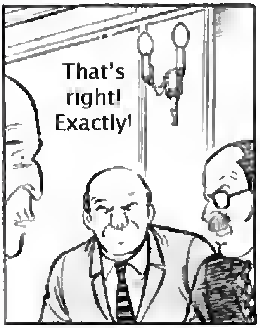
And what about the employees? Does he expect them all to pack up and move out of Tokyo?
I just don't get it.
There's nothing beneficial about moving the Akagi Head Office out into the sticks!

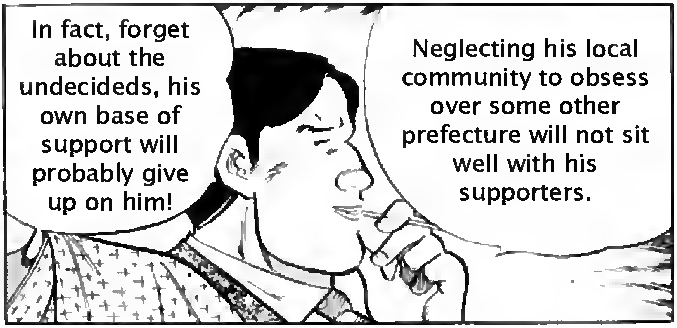

...
SLAM
It's an outrage!

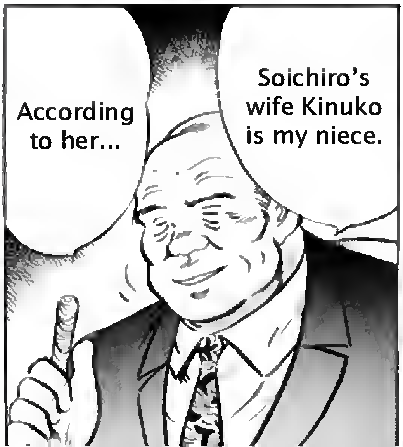
The Head Office isn't going anywhere. That's just nonsense.
Mr. Taga-wa!
...!?
I'm not sure who started this wild rumor, but take it with a grain of salt.
Now now, let's be level-headed about this.
But he's touring the grounds as we speak!
He ran for office once before and lost.
Publi-city stunt!?
It's just a publicity stunt for the big election.
...
...
It's all about building up a good image.
Once the Diet is dissolved this fall, or sometime this year, he is absolutely determined to win the election.

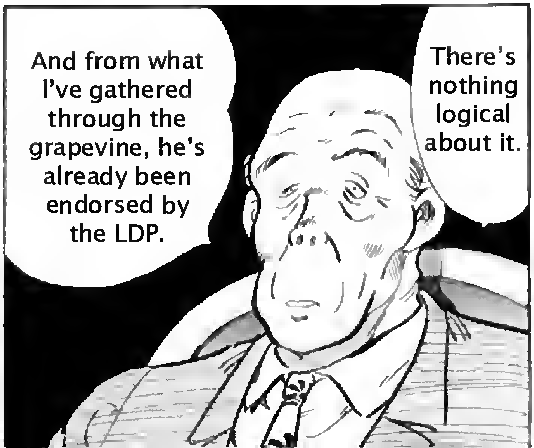

Putting energy into some obscure village in Aomori has no benefit whatsoever on winning a local election!
It doesn't add up! Maybe if he was running for the National House of Councilors, but he's aiming for the House of Representatives!


Getting elected is dependent on securing a solid base of support, but winning over undecided voters is also quite significant.
He ran as an Independent before, and was very close to winning.
So basically, he claims to fight against nuclear power to get a boost in the polls, namely from the undecideds.

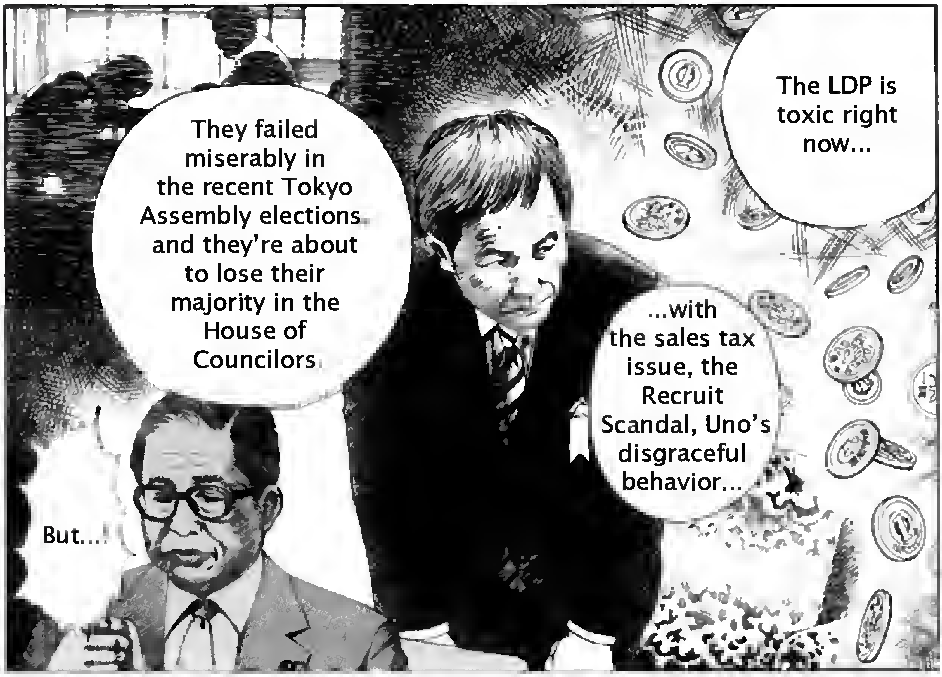

That's right! Exactly!

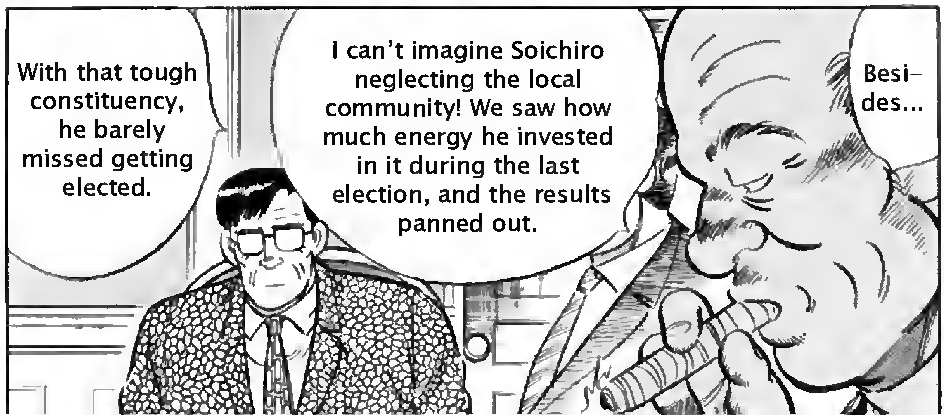

In fact, forget about the undecideds, his own base of support will probably give up on him!
Neglecting his local community to obsess over some other prefecture will not sit well with his supporters.


According to her...
Soichiro's wife Kinuko is my niece.


And from what I've gathered through the grapevine, he's already been endorsed by the LDP.
There's nothing logical about it.

...and is determined to run as an Independent again!
...he turned down the LDP...


They failed miserably in the recent Tokyo Assembly elections and they're about to lose their majority in the House of Councilors.
The LDP is toxic right now...
...with the sales tax issue, the Recruit Scandal, Uno's disgraceful behavior...
But...


With that tough constituency, he barely missed getting elected.
I can't imagine Soichiro neglecting the local community! We saw how much energy he invested in it during the last election, and the results panned out.
Besi-des...

His current actions were calculated in advance for a reason.
六ヶ所村
Rokkasho Village
There's no need to worry. He'd never do anything stupid for his own ambitions.
Rokkasho Village
六ヶ所村
With over 90% of his supporters in the agriculture and forest industries...
ミーン...
...
...makes him look like a righteous man, risking himself to protect national lands, even though it's a prefecture outside of his constituency.
...his sudden willingness to assist Rokkasho Village...
え!?
What!?
Told me to move half my factories to Rokkasho Village. And if I refuse, he'll hold a board meeting to dismiss me as president...
Actually, Soichiro approached me about this.

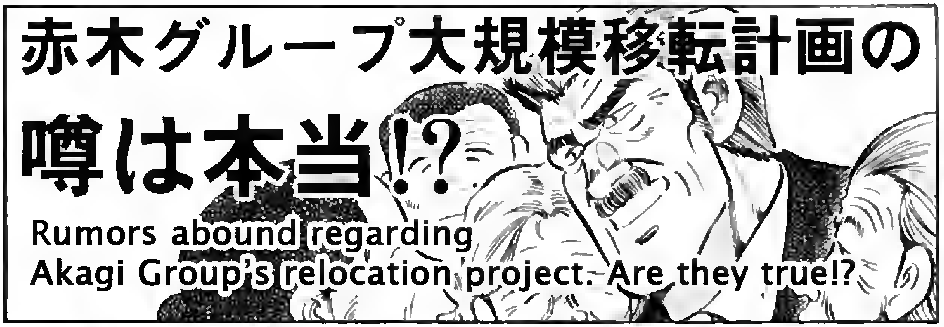
RUSTLE RUSTLE

VROOOOOH
VEEEEEEEN
ゴオオオ…

What a...
...beauti-ful village.

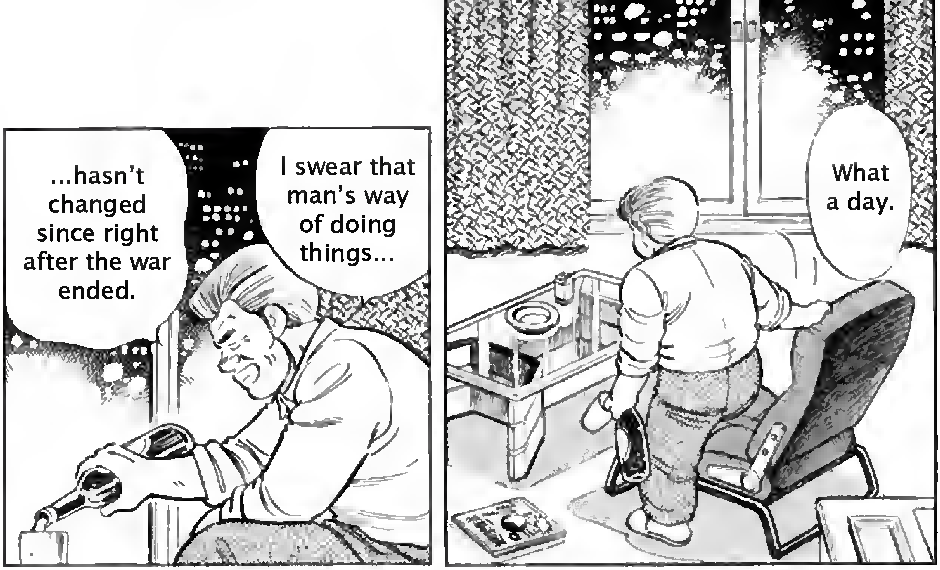
Why is he dragging us down for his own ambitions?
I know it sounds crazy, but I owe him a lot.
You see, Tagawa!?
That sounds like a threat to me!
And you didn't say any-thing!?
You should know how Soichiro's mind works! He'll do anything to get what he wants!
Do you still think it's nothing more than an image booster for his precious campaign!?
But once he's made up his mind on something, he'd sell his own mother to get it!
It's true we wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for him.
Exactly, and we've got to take action.
I wouldn't put it past him!
So you believe he's ruining all of us, here at Akagi Group, for his own vile ambitions?

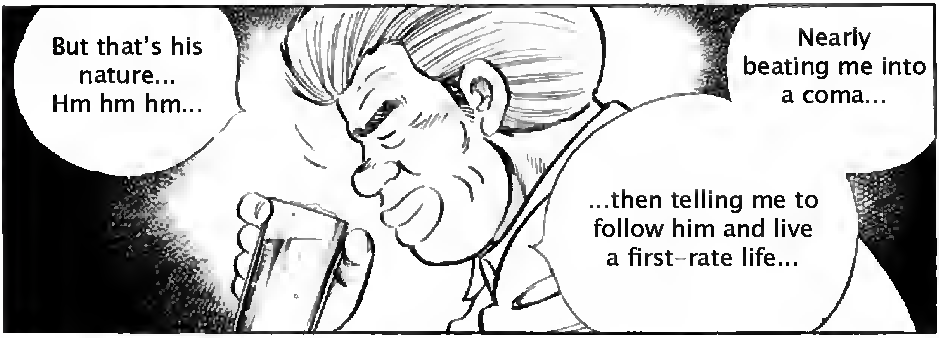
Akagi Group President Soichiro Akagi inspects new site
赤木グループ総帥
赤木総一郎氏 みずから
現地視察
施中
Rokkasho Village Office
六ヶ所村役場


赤木グループ大規模移転計画の
噂は本当!?
Rumors abound regarding
Akagi Group's relocation project. Are they true!?

ゆれる周辺ムラ
反核燃対派に希望サクル人
Drugs & Cosmetics
くすりと化粧品
地域活性化に新たな道
desired by
anti-nuke groups
Unrest ensues among
village locals
A new path to local
revitalization
六ヶ所村
施設

It's all over the news! But is there any truth to it!?
Why would my father even entertain the thought of moving to Aomori!?
He hasn't told me anything!
What is the meaning of this, Kasai!?
Akagi Head Office
The level of grandstanding is outrageous!
What could he be thinking!?
A big move like this should be discussed carefully at a board meeting, shouldn't it!?
Sigh...
I'll ask as soon as he gets back... Yes... I'm terribly sorry.
I...I wish I knew.
He told me he needed to get away on a little vacation.


...hasn't changed since right after the war ended.
I swear that man's way of doing things...
What a day.


But that's his nature... Hm hm hm...
Nearly beating me into a coma...
...then telling me to follow him and live a first-rate life...

DING DONG
Who on earth could ever understand how he feels?
Who could ever...
...way of living, huh...
A first-rate...

Coming.
Who is it?
I'm uh...
...here to collect your newspaper fee.
Oh...
KACHUK
カチャ
Sure ...
Hello.
...
How much?
Um...
Heh heh...

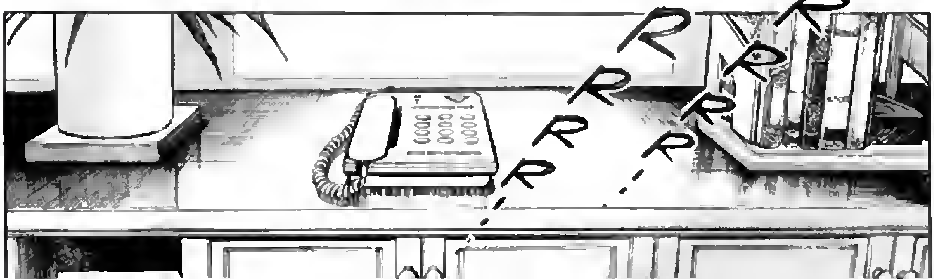
Sir...
DRIP
It's you...
Hey ...
THUNK
Please help me!
Let me hide here! Please!
Someone's trying to kill me!
Kill you....!?

Where the hell is Ayako!?
She never comes home!
SMASH
GULULUL
That woman ...
...out with some old friends from college.
Oh, tonight she's uh...
...and the other board members are furious...
...the union's going nuts...
Makes me wanna tear my hair out.
What kind of life is this?
Now that Dad's acting crazy...

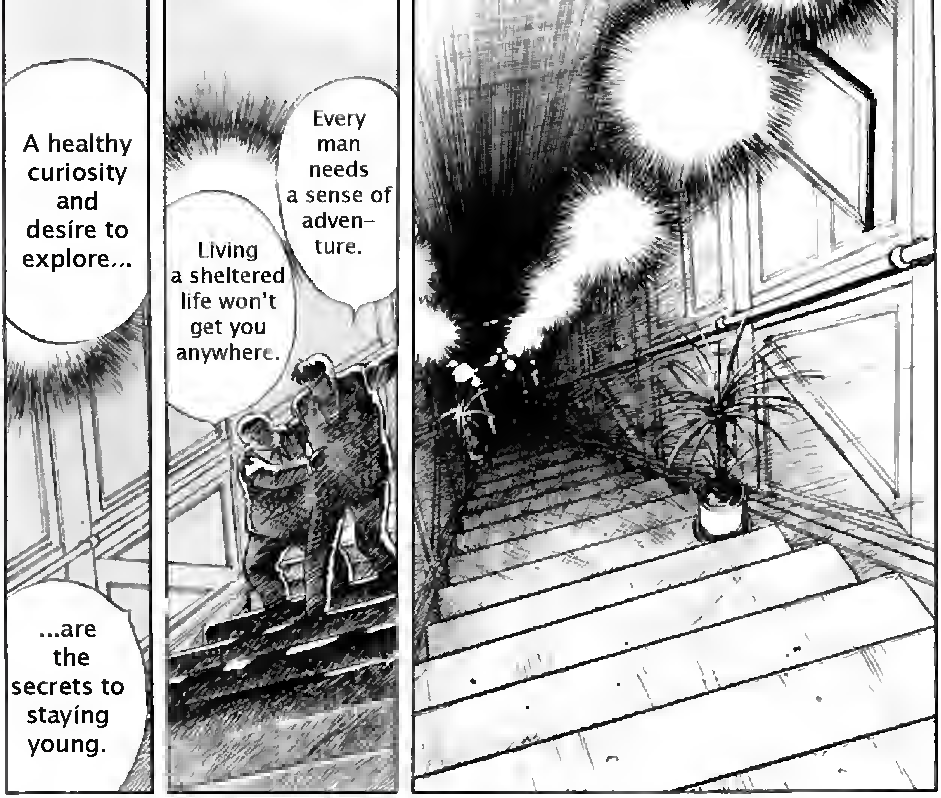
Yuki...
I come home exhausted ...
...and my wife's galli-vanting around the city.

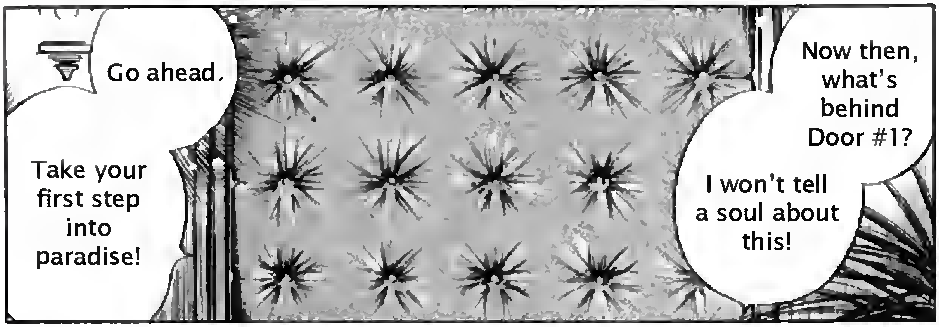
Yuki...

What's wrong with me!?
What did I do wrong...? Dear God, what did I do wrong?


R
R
R
R
R
R
R
R

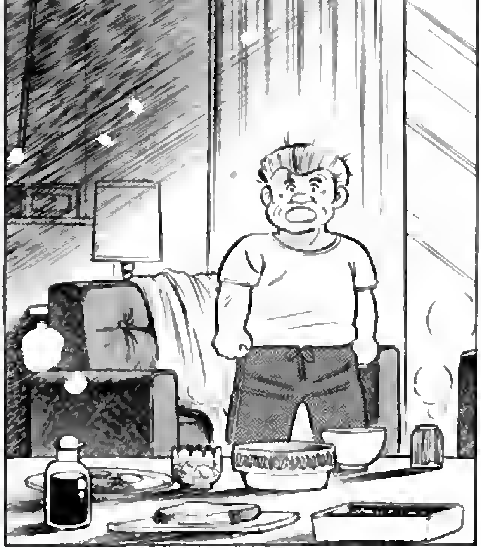
...
You need to clear your mind!
Shoma, let's go have some fun!
...
The night is young! You're tired already? At your age?

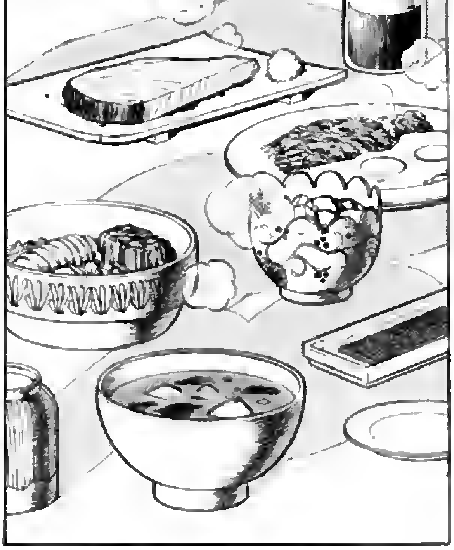

A healthy curiosity and desire to explore...
...are the secrets to staying young.
Every man needs a sense of adven-ture.
Living a sheltered life won't get you anywhere.

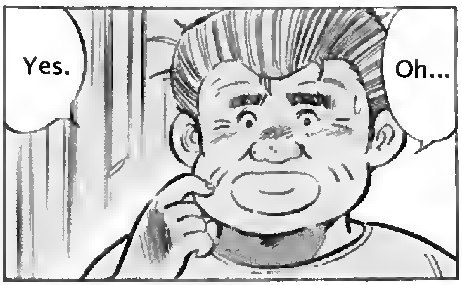

Go ahead.
Take your first step into paradise!
Now then, what's behind Door #1?
I won't tell a soul about this!

Chapter 11:
Changing Tides

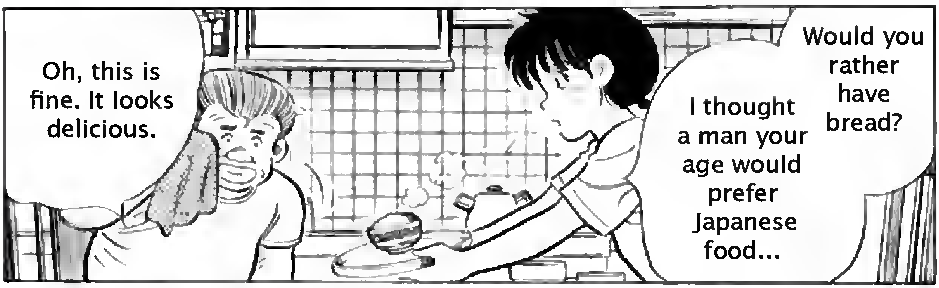
笠井
NIKON
TUK TUK
CHOP CHOP CHOP
Uhhh ...
SHEEK
Time for breakfast. Rise and shine!
Good morning, sir.





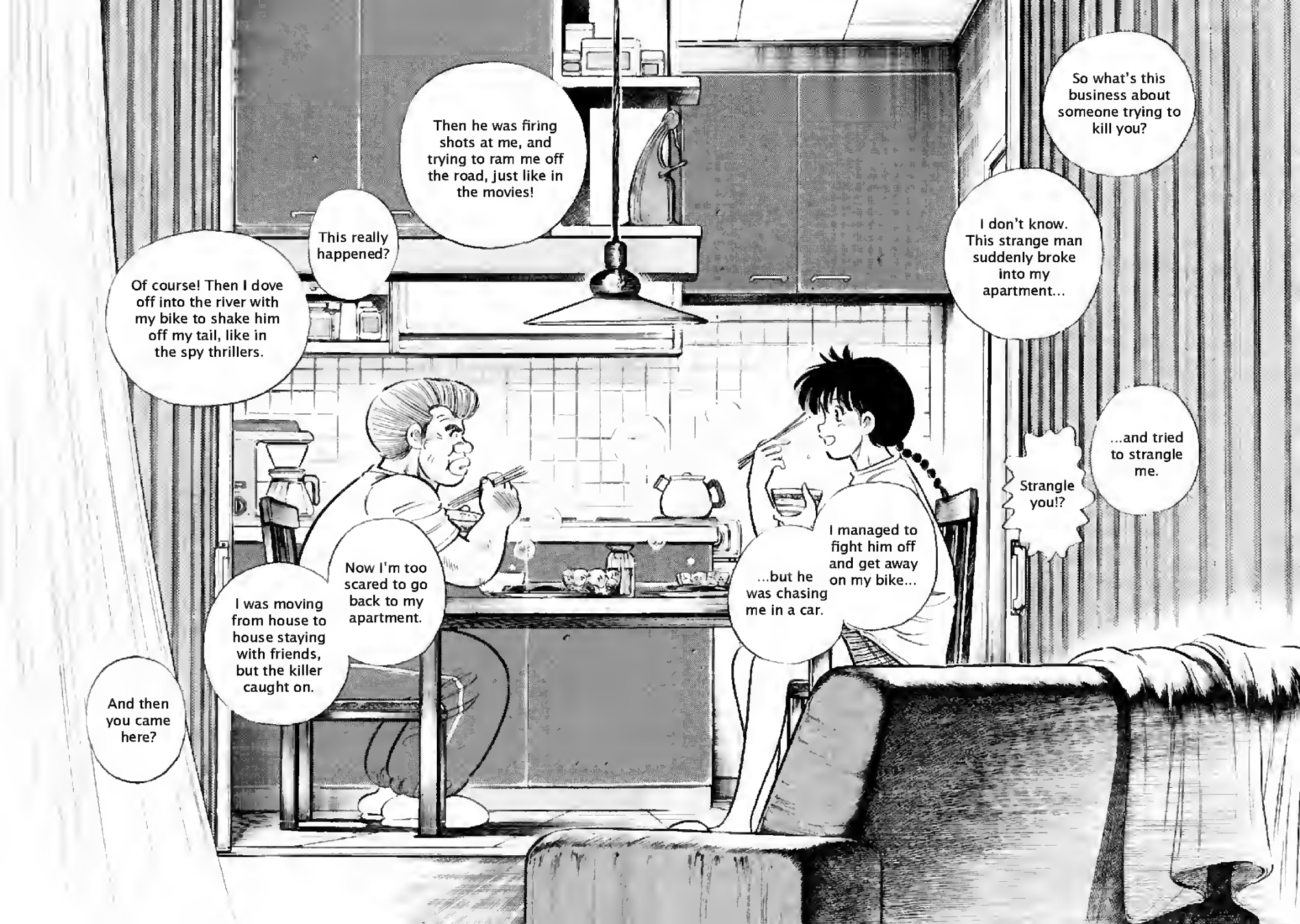

Yes.
Oh...

Wash up and eat.
What's the matter?


Oh, this is fine. It looks delicious.
I thought a man your age would prefer Japanese food...
Would you rather have bread?

GRIN

Thank you for doing this.
I stopped eating breakfast since my wife passed on...


So what's this business about someone trying to kill you?
I don't know. This strange man suddenly broke into my apartment...
...and tried to strangle me.
Strangle you!?
I managed to fight him off and get away on my bike...
...but he was chasing me in a car.
Then he was firing shots at me, and trying to ram me off the road, just like in the movies!
This really happened?
Of course! Then I dove off into the river with my bike to shake him off my tail, like in the spy thrillers.
Now I'm too scared to go back to my apartment.
I was moving from house to house staying with friends, but the killer caught on.
And then you came here?

So what's this business about someone trying to kill you?
I don't know. This strange man suddenly broke into my apartment...
...and tried to strangle me.
Strangle you!?
I managed to fight him off and get away on my bike...
...but he was chasing me in a car.

Then he was firing shots at me, and trying to ram me off the road, just like in the movies!
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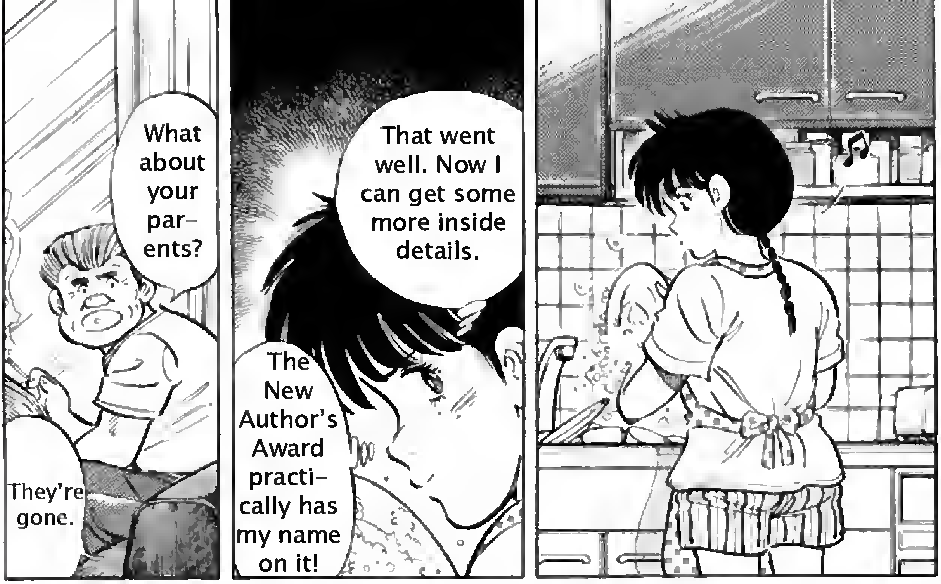
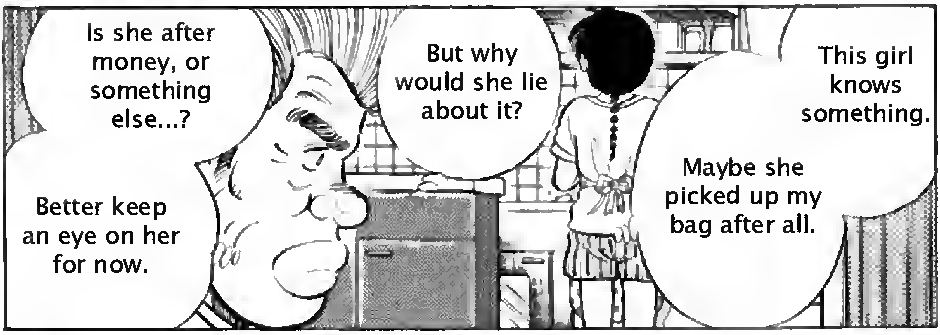
Now I'm too scared to go back to my apartment.
I was moving from house to house staying with friends, but the killer caught on.
And then you came here?

...
Maybe I went over the top...
...but I've got to earn his sympathy if I want help.
But someone could really be following her.
Sounds question-able.
I asked at the hospital.
How'd you know my address?
You know what...
...I think this whole thing is related to your car accident somehow.
Why would you be any safer here?
The killer could come to my place.
Okay, okay. You can stay here for a while.
Really!? Oh, I'm so happy!
...
By some terrible misunderstanding, someone out there wants me dead.
And I'm petrified.


What about your parents?
They're gone.
That went well. Now I can get some more inside details.
The New Author's Award practically has my name on it!


Is she after money, or something else...?
Better keep an eye on her for now.
But why would she lie about it?
This girl knows something.
Maybe she picked up my bag after all.

...about that shirt and underwear.
I've been meaning to ask you...

I mean, I was wearing the same clothes for days on the run.
Oh, sorry. Heh heh heh... I borrowed them without asking.

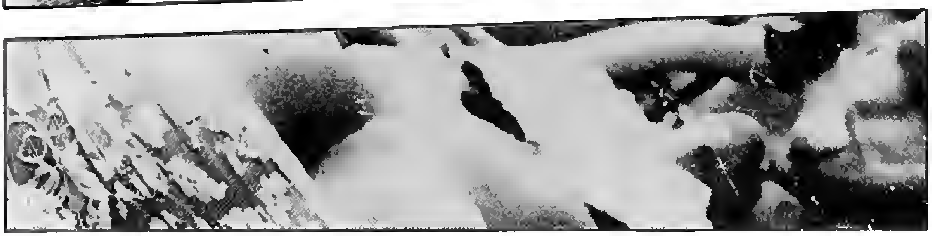
That's not a real answer.
Because that man appeared right after it happened.
By the way...
...what makes you think my accident is related to someone trying to take your life?
Morn-ing.
Good morn-ing, sir.
Good grief ...
Well, I'm not safe alone in your apartment.
What, you want me to take you to the office?
Would you mind if I...
...
You live a pretty simple life for a member of the board at Akagi Group.
LEGEND
Just make me your secretary or something, okay?

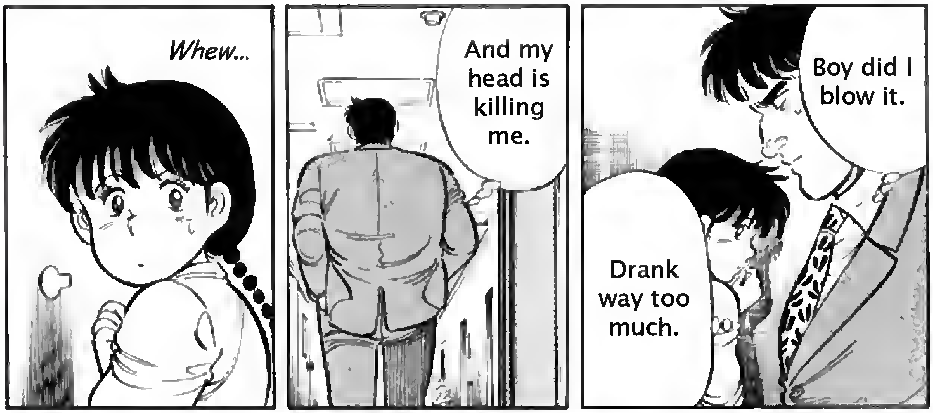
Very well, sir.
Driver, take this young lady to buy some nice clothes.
Unfortunately, I've got an emergency board meeting today...
...and I can't take you with me.
I'll see you this evening.
But sir...
Phew.
...until President Akagi gets back.
I've got to keep these guys occupied...

Would you like to go to Ginza?
Or maybe Shinjuku would better suit your needs.
He got away.
Now the bug I planted on his necktie is out of range.
Stop here! I gotta pee!
Pee...?
LADY
...
COFFEE
ポーラ
Miss, are you...!
WHAM
Yikes!

SKRRT
Sorry about that.
I've gotta hurry, the meeting's already started!
!!

Oh my gosh...!
He should lead me to the meeting.
And the man in those... pictures.
It's Soichiro Akagi's eldest son, next in line for the presidency at Akagi Group!
BADUMP BADUMP
ドドドドドド
...
VVVVVV

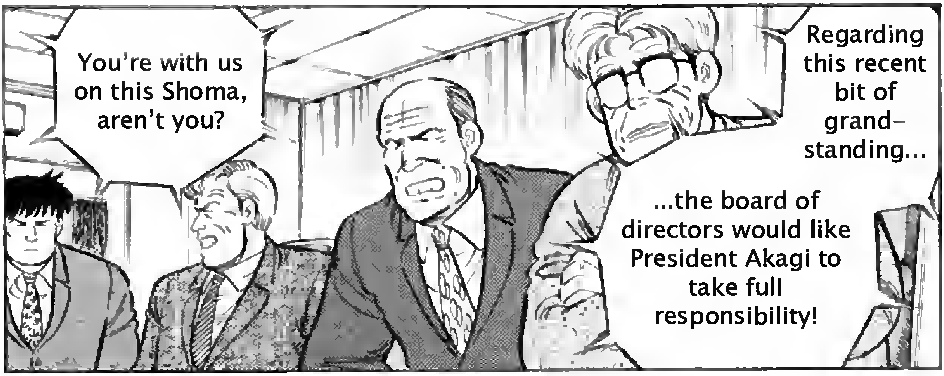


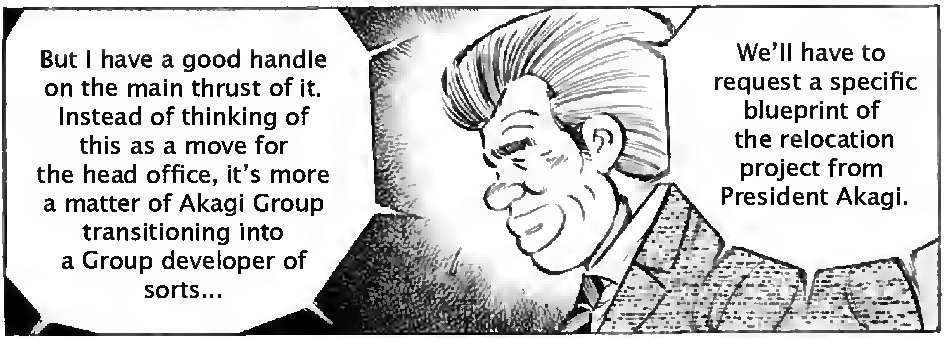

Whew...
And my head is killing me.
Boy did I blow it.
Drank way too much.

My bug should work from this range.
He must've gone in that room at the end of the hall.

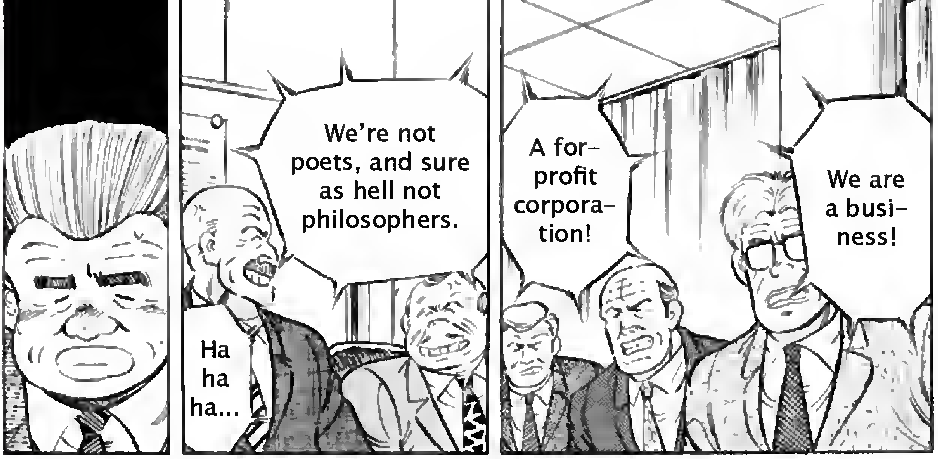
SLAM
WOOSH
Ladies room!

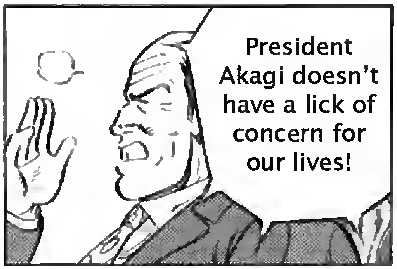
Anyway, once Mr. Akagi gets back...
...he's got some explaining to do.
SLAM
Sorry I'm late.

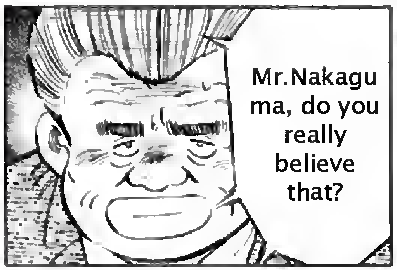

You're with us on this Shoma, aren't you?
Regarding this recent bit of grand-standing...
...the board of directors would like President Akagi to take full responsibility!

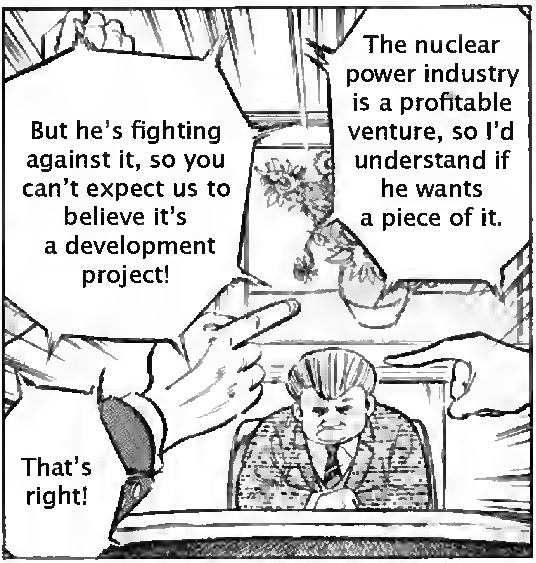

But I have a good handle on the main thrust of it. Instead of thinking of this as a move for the head office, it's more a matter of Akagi Group transitioning into a Group developer of sorts...
We'll have to request a specific blueprint of the relocation project from President Akagi.

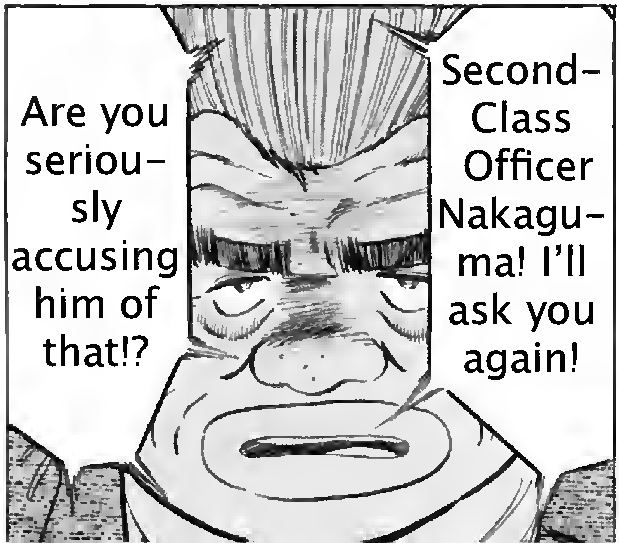
...I don't think you understand!
Kasai...

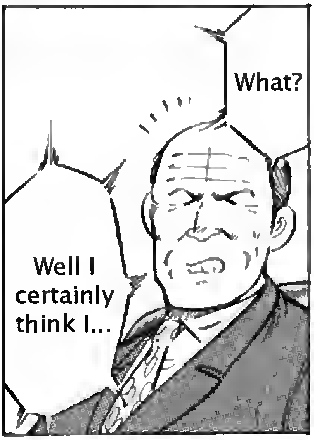

We're not poets, and sure as hell not philosophers.
Ha ha ha...
A for-profit corporation!
We are a business!

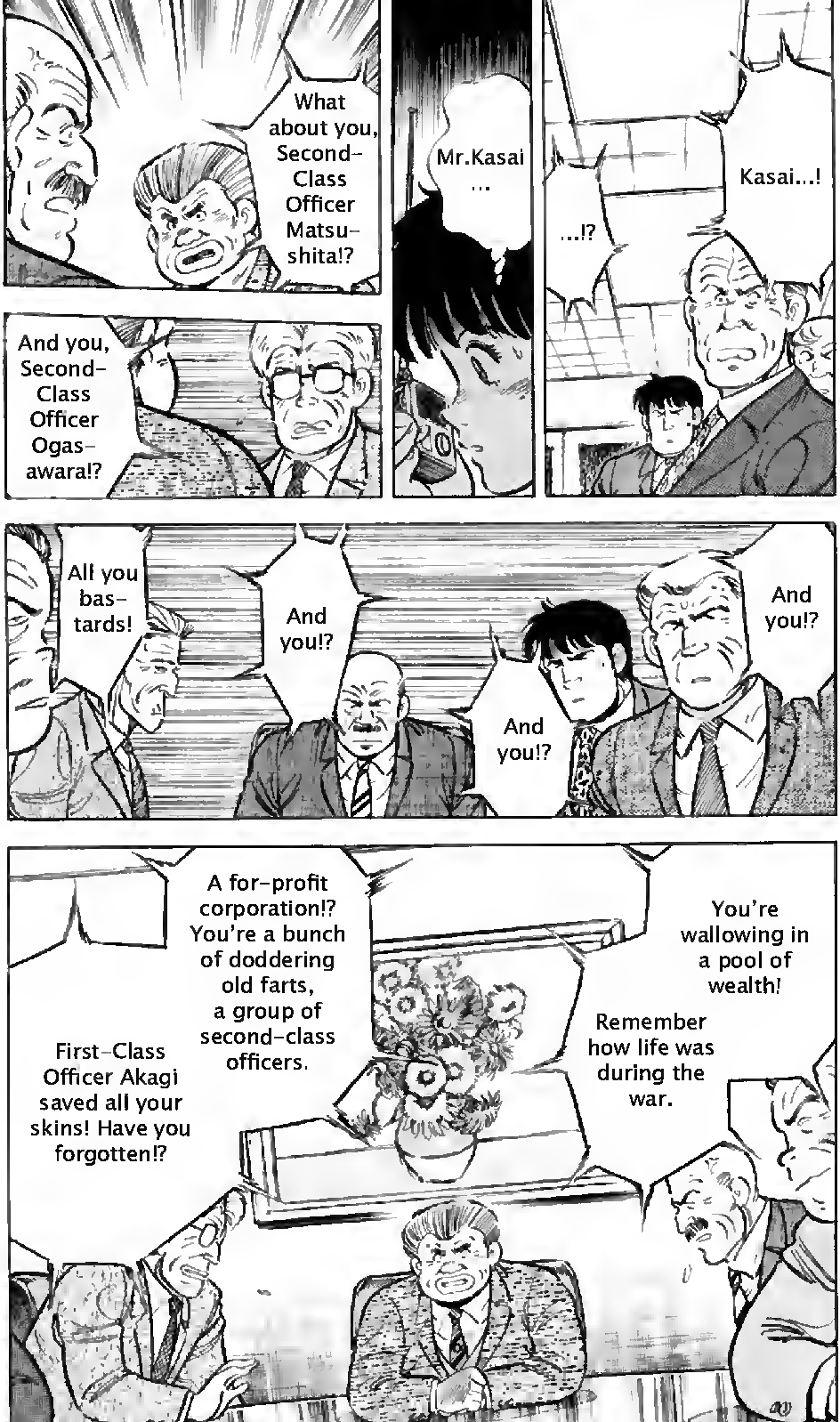

President Akagi doesn't have a lick of concern for our lives!


Mr.Nakagu ma, do you really believe that?


But he's fighting against it, so you can't expect us to believe it's a development project!
The nuclear power industry is a profitable venture, so I'd understand if he wants a piece of it.
That's right!

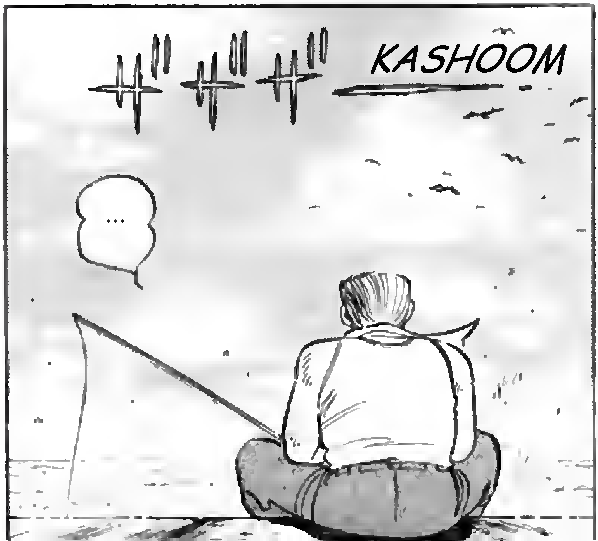

Are you seriou-sly accusing him of that!?
Second-Class Officer Nakagu-ma! I'll ask you again!


What?
Well I certainly think I...

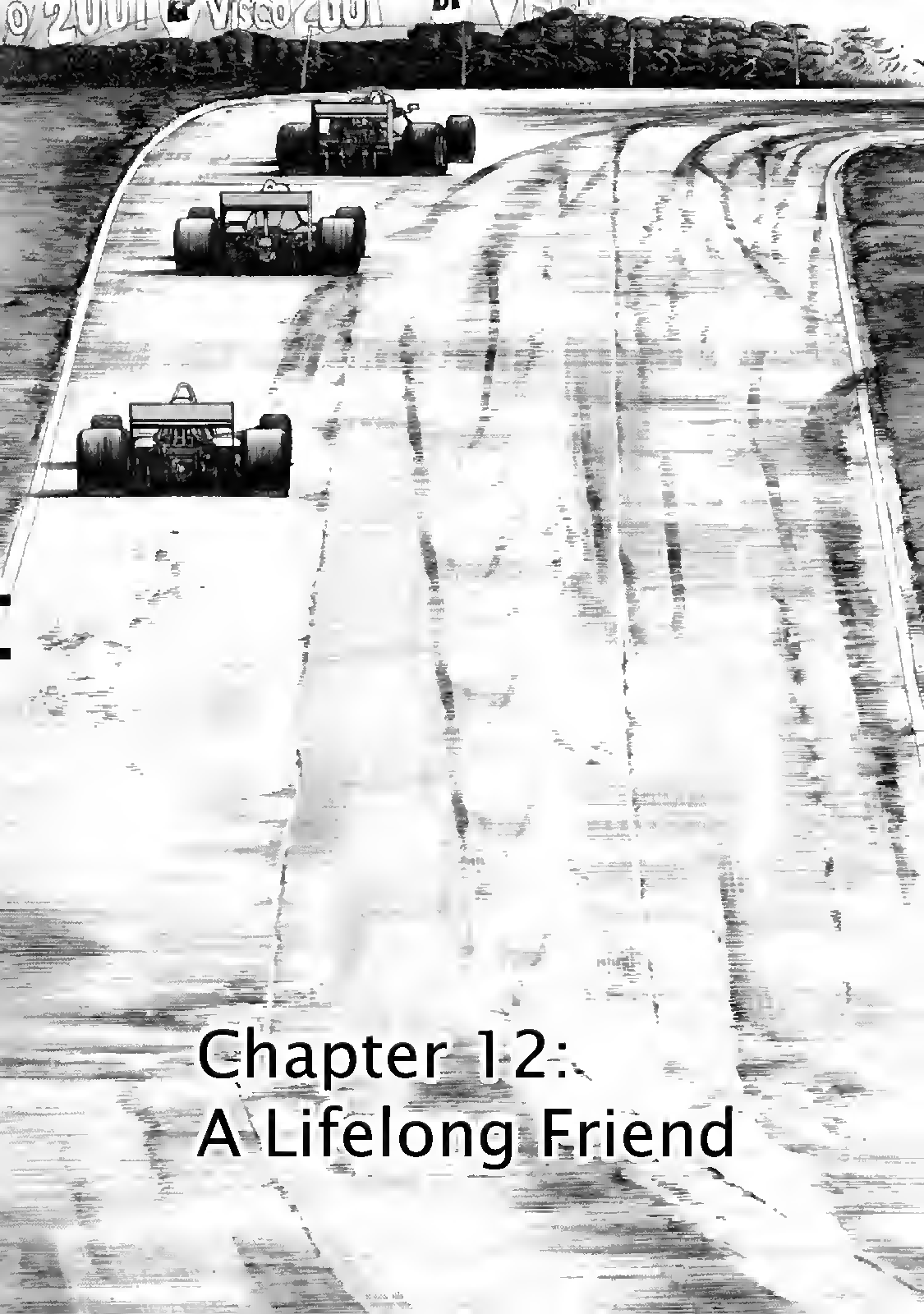

What about you, Second-Class Officer Matsu-shita!?
Mr.Kasai ...
Kasai...!
...!?
And you, Second-Class Officer Ogas-awara!?
All you bas-tards!
And you!?
And you!?
And you!?
A for-profit corporation!? You're a bunch of doddering old farts, a group of second-class officers.
You're wallowing in a pool of wealth!
Remember how life was during the war.
First-Class Officer Akagi saved all your skins! Have you forgotten!?

Do you know the true reason President Akagi helped all of you...
...crying on the verge of starvation in that war-torn wasteland!?
I know you remember!
That in order for humanity to live comfortably, the country needs to be at peace and financially stable!
SLAM
Do you know why, Second-Class Haneda!?

KASHOOOM
Any fish bitin' today?


KASHOOM
....

You bet.



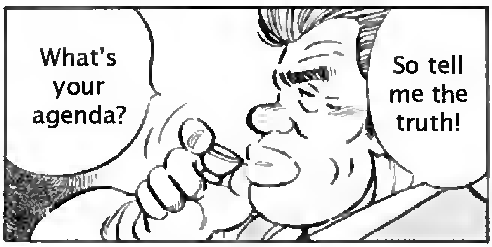
Chapter 12:
A Lifelong Friend

He told me somebody hit him on the head.
And I didn't know what to do.
とんがりCorn
It was terrible, sir.
I saw what happened.
He just slipped and fell on his own!
But that couldn't be true.
Your driver passed out in the coffee shop's restroom.
NEC
...
All right, if you say so.
... ap- proached me like this.
Tell me the real reason you...
AHEM
I've been meaning to ask you. What is your real agenda here?
By the way, Yuri... is it?

And you've gotten involved in quite the burdensome situation.
You're telling me that, ever since you witnessed my accident, someone has been trying to kill you.
So according to your logic, I should be protecting you.
I told you, someone's trying to kill me...
I've heard that already ...

You've jumped from the frying pan into the fire by coming here.
But it doesn't make sense.
Isn't it obvious to assume that, the man who's after you, is most likely after me as well?

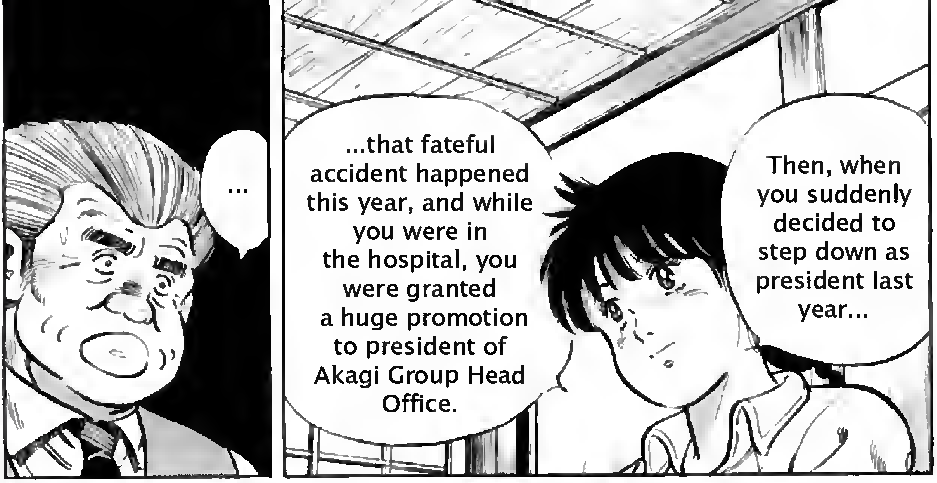
This is so yummy!

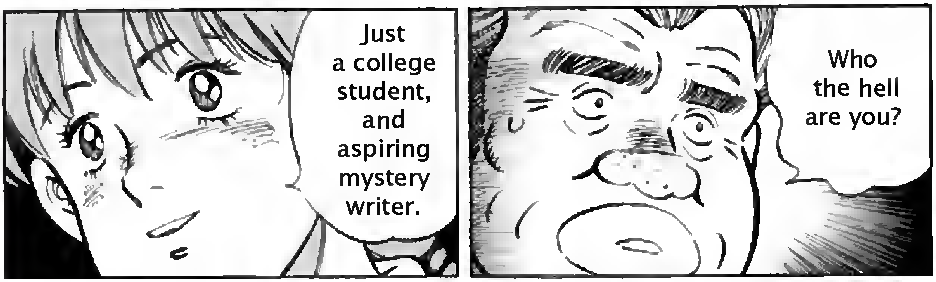

What's your agenda?
So tell me the truth!

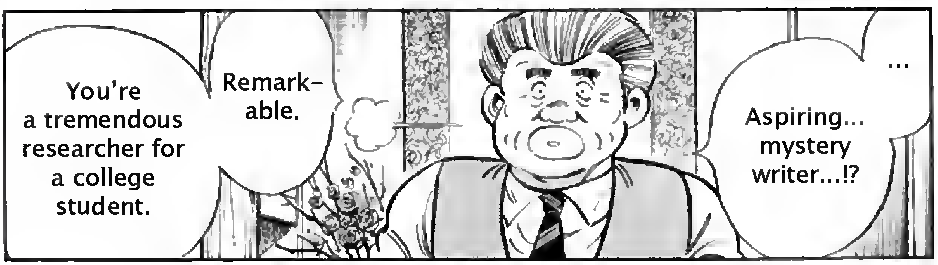
Okay.
Oh, you're tired of it, I guess...

Don't you want any?
This one's delicious too.
I've never eaten a delicacy like this before!
だはは
HA HA HA

But it's funny, I never would have had you pegged as someone who used to round up women, and act as their pimp just after the war.
So you've eaten out so much, it's only natural that you'd get tired of it, no matter how delicious!
You've been living alone since your wife passed away 10 years ago.
What kind of man is Soichiro Akagi, who was able to transform you like this?
You haven't been with a woman since your wife passed, and you have no hobbies.
...did you...!?
How...
Heh heh...
How did you find that out?
I don't be-lieve it.
At first, you worked as Mr. Akagi's right-hand man, claiming Tagawa Zinc as your own, changing its name to Toho Chemicals, and developing it into the Group's core business.
And together you founded what's known as Akagi Group today.
You've been working with Mr. Akagi since you met just after the war.
MUNCH MUNCH
MUNCH MUNCH

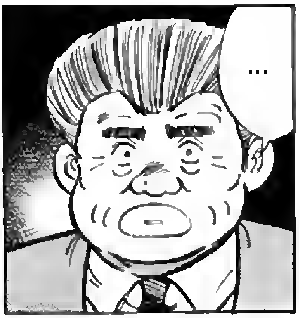

...
...that fateful accident happened this year, and while you were in the hospital, you were granted a huge promotion to president of Akagi Group Head Office.
Then, when you suddenly decided to step down as president last year...

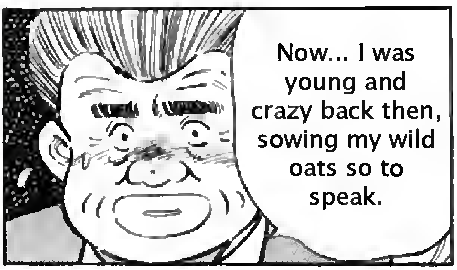

Just a college student, and aspiring mystery writer.
Who the hell are you?

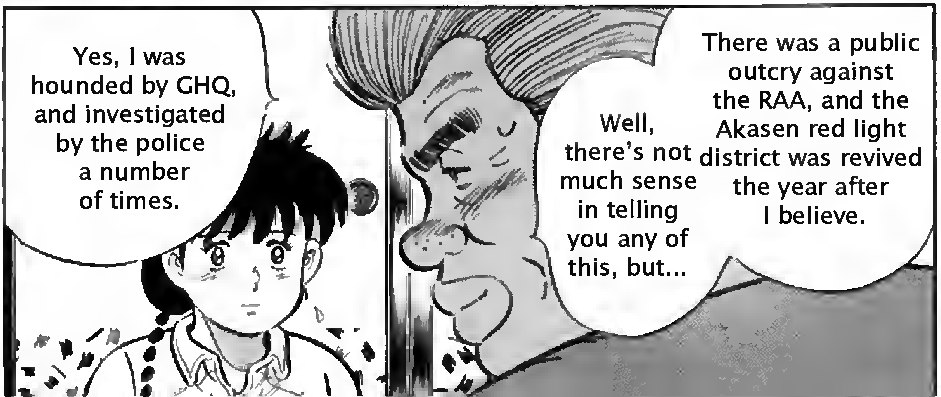

You're a tremendous researcher for a college student.
Remark-able.
...
Aspiring... mystery writer...!?

The Akagi Family was quite wealthy even before the war, so its success isn't entirely due to Soichiro Akagi's business savvy.
But why did it grow so quickly?
When I looked into the history of Akagi Group, I found it rapidly grew into a large conglomerate just after the war.
Well, it wasn't easy.

Usually if a company grows so quickly right after a war, they did something unethical in the aftermath.
As an aspiring mystery writer, I felt I needed to check into the period of confusion after the war.





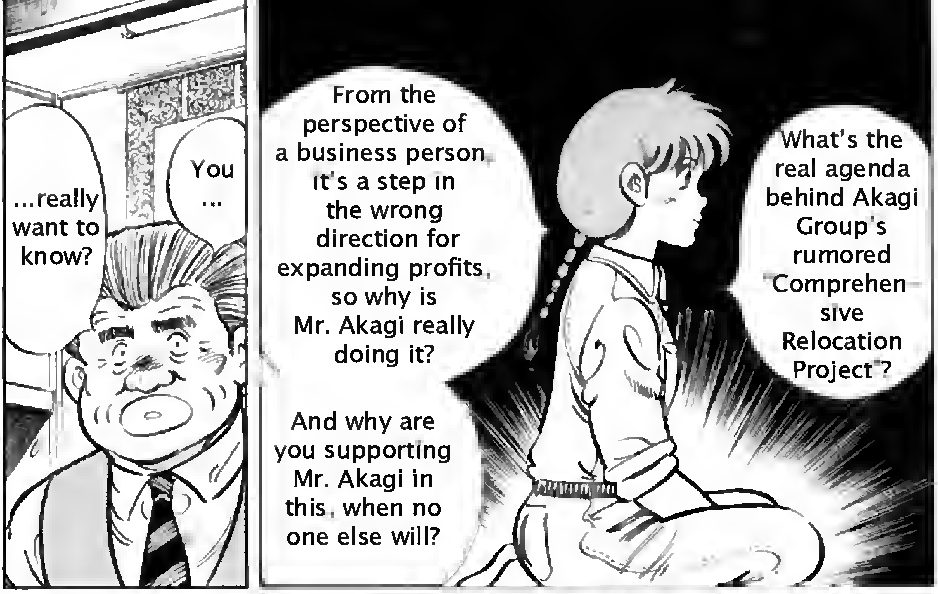

Yes, I was hounded by GHQ, and investigated by the police a number of times.
Well, there's not much sense in telling you any of this, but...
There was a public outcry against the RAA, and the Akasen red light district was revived the year after I believe.

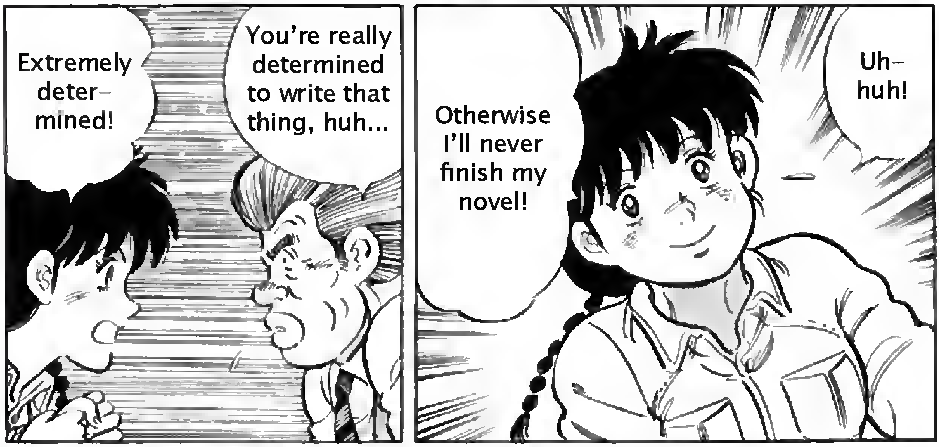
5

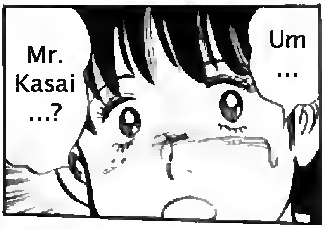
RAA = Recreation and Amusement Association- A prostitution facility organized for occupying forces.

According to the files, you were under common-law marriage with a certain woman, and I found her hometown address.
That was the hardest answer to find.
But do you know how I met President Akagi?
Yes, I met with her. She still lives at that address.
And seems happy in her old age.
Then you... found that woman... and...?
What!?
...still alive then.
Wow... That woman is...
...

A mystery writer... Who would've thought it... Ha ha ha...
That's what it takes to write mysteries.
Your insatiable curiosity and ability to take action...
...are astounding.
You terrify me.
Uh-huh. Whatever it is that you and Soichiro Akagi are truly seeking.
Theme?
But my interest shifted to a different path while I was investigating.
To the theme of my novel.
At first I just wanted to identify the man trying to kill me, or whoever made the order.
What we're seeking...?
...my novel will be complete!
Exactly. If I can figure that out...


You ...
...really want to know?
From the perspective of a business person, it's a step in the wrong direction for expanding profits, so why is Mr. Akagi really doing it?
And why are you supporting Mr. Akagi in this, when no one else will?
What's the real agenda behind Akagi Group's rumored "Comprehensive Relocation Project"?


Extremely determined!
You're really determined to write that thing, huh...
Otherwise I'll never finish my novel!
Uh-huh!

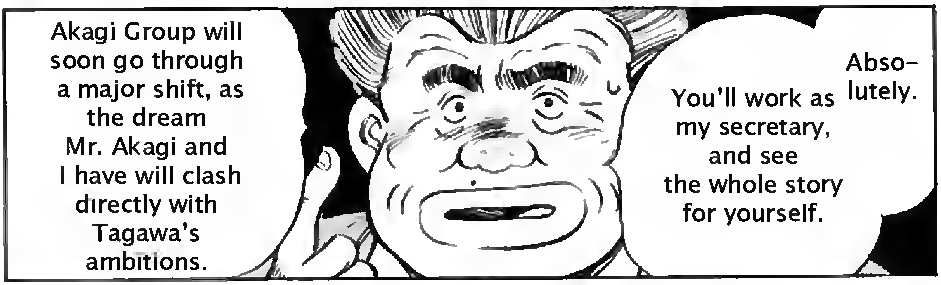

Mr. Kasai ...?
Um ...

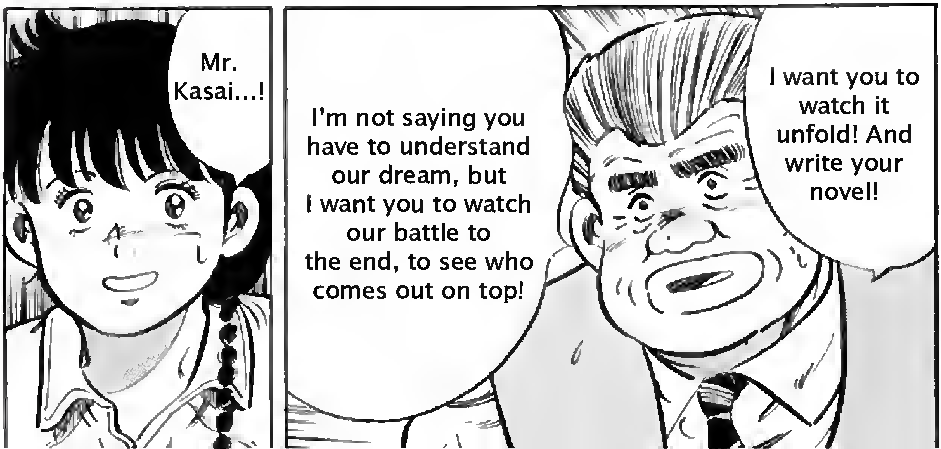
Ha ha ha ha ha...
Hah... Ha ha ha ha...
BAM
BAM

Mr. Akagi ...
...I'm blown away by this.
He's crying...
...how Akagi and I feel...
Could you really under-stand...
Could you... really... Wuhuuh...
This young girl, who's never known war, who's never experienced post-war starvation...
...wants to understand our dream.
This girl, who could be my grand-daughter...
...wants to understand our dream!
This young girl, who I assumed thought of the occupation period as ancient history...
...born into the privilege of modern Japan, raised without a care in the world...

I'll make you my secretary.
Yes... I've got it...
Maybe you've had enough to drink.
Are you okay, sir?

Can I really be your secretary!?
A little.
As much as you've researched, you must know about Tagawa too, right?
Huh!?

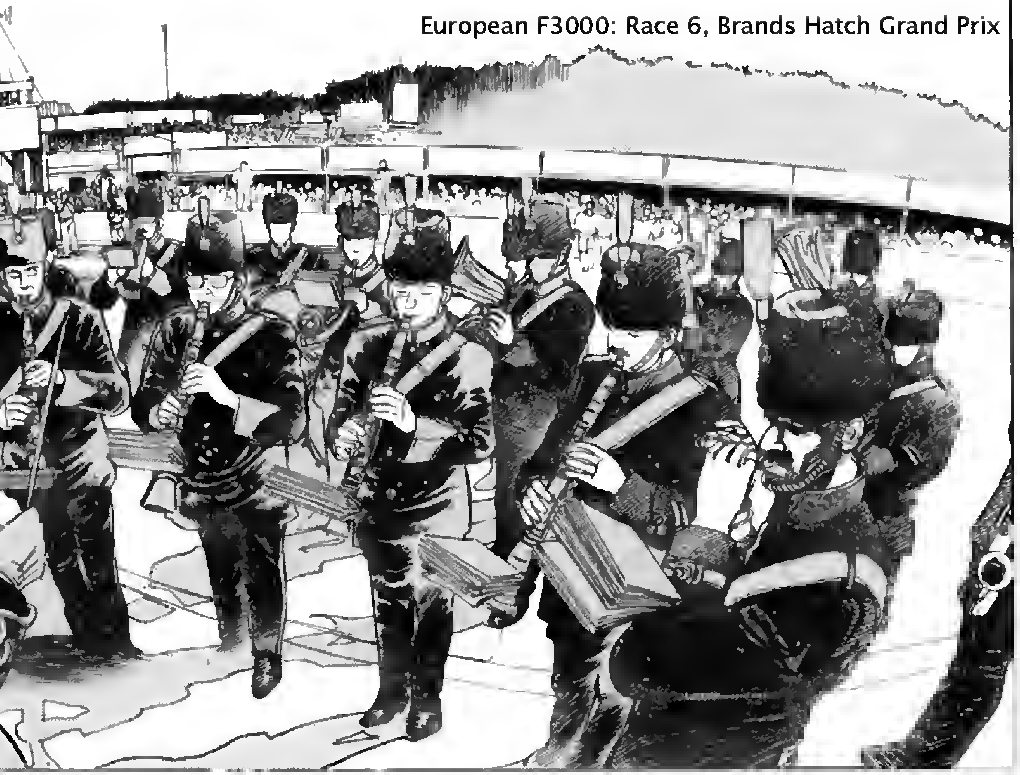

Akagi Group will soon go through a major shift, as the dream Mr. Akagi and I have will clash directly with Tagawa's ambitions.
You'll work as my secretary, and see the whole story for yourself.
Abso-lutely.

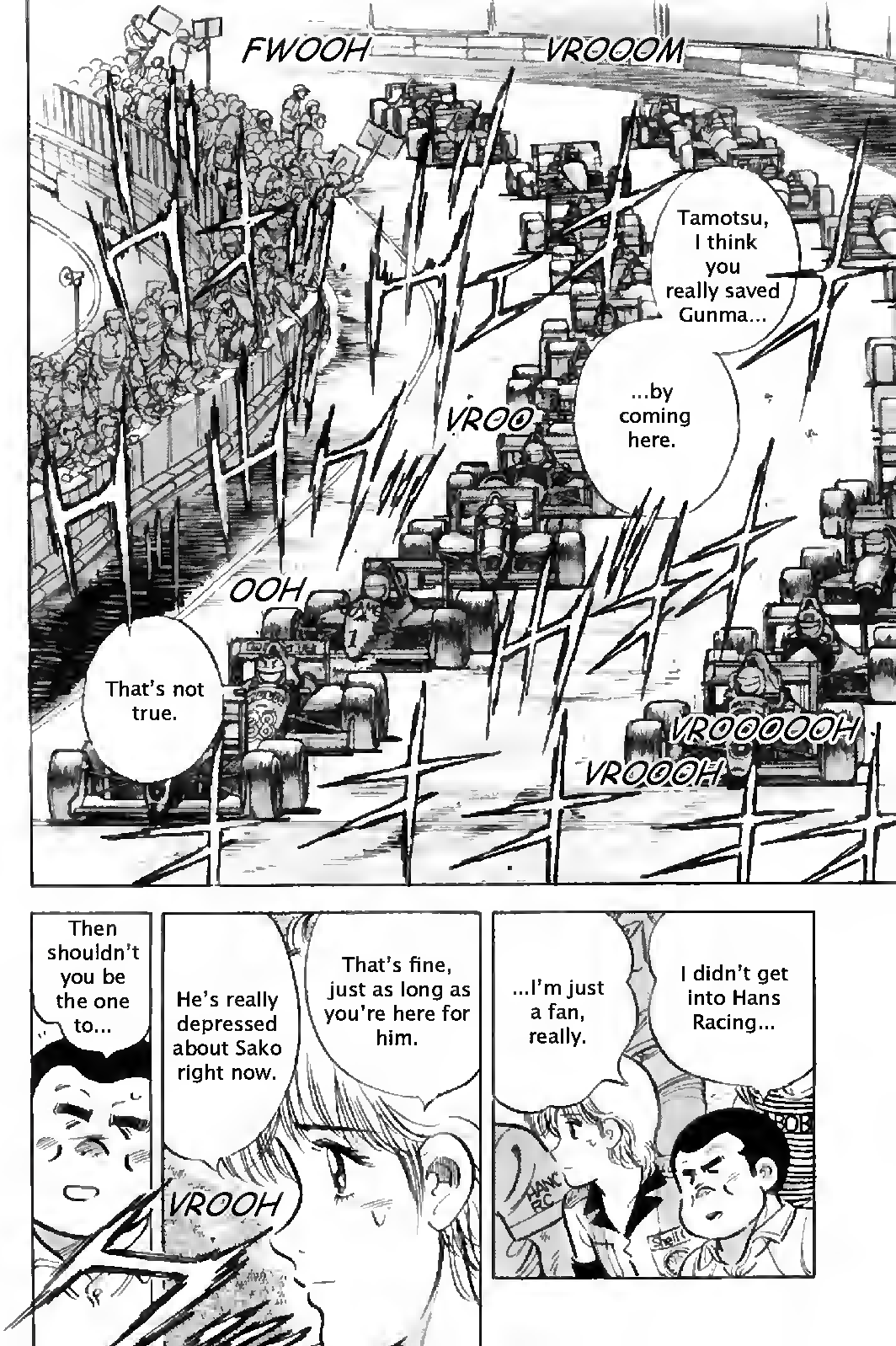

Mr. Kasai...!
I'm not saying you have to understand our dream, but I want you to watch our battle to the end, to see who comes out on top!
I want you to watch it unfold! And write your novel!

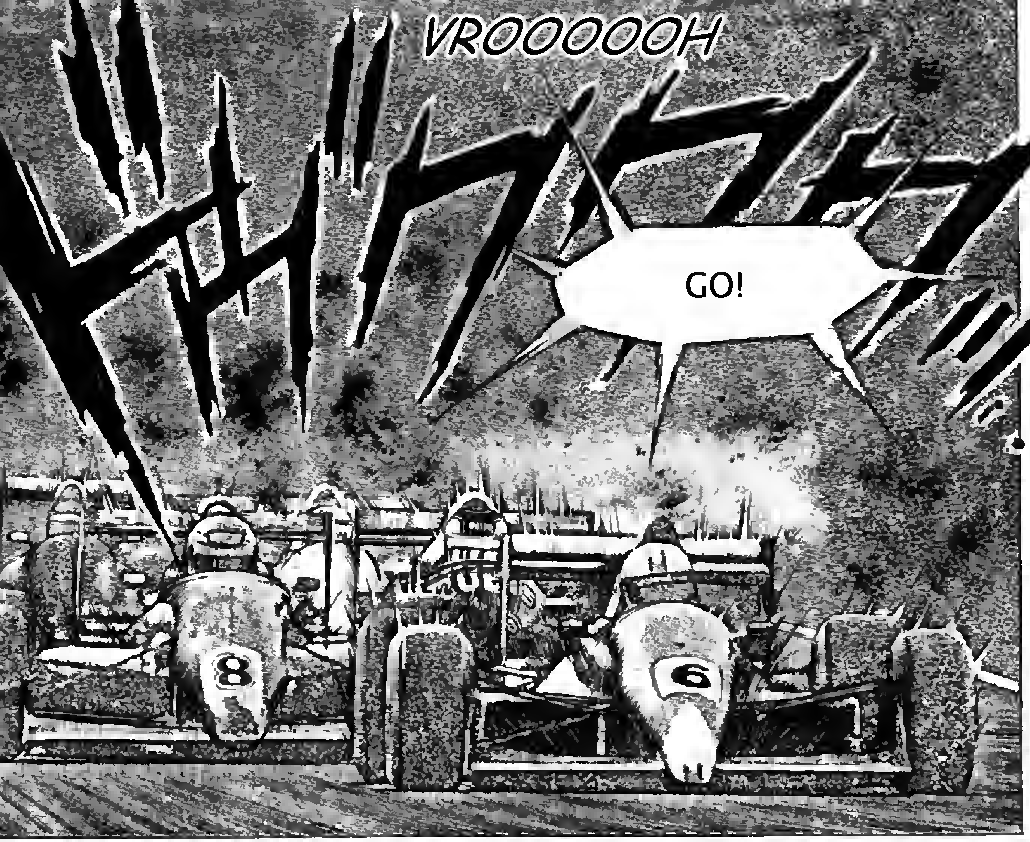
You watch to the very end!
You got it?
To see who wins!

SWOOSH
Yes, sir!

European F3000: Race 6, Brands Hatch Grand Prix

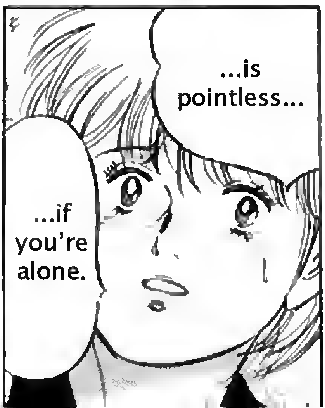



FWOOH
VROOOM
Tamotsu, I think you really saved Gunma...
...by coming here.
VROO
OOH
That's not true.
VROOOOOH
VROOOH
Then shouldn't you be the one to...
He's really depressed about Sako right now.
That's fine, just as long as you're here for him.
VROOH
...I'm just a fan, really.
I didn't get into Hans Racing...


VROOOOOH
GO!
8
6

Going after a dream...
GUNMA AKAGI

...when you're by yourself. And it's hard to bear.
So please...
GUNMA
There's such a small chance of succeeding...


...is pointless...
...if you're alone.

"F" Volume 16 THE END

F VOL.16

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